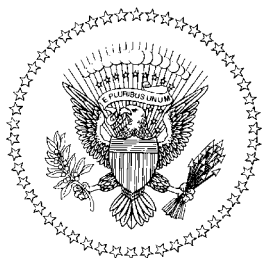


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, December 13, 1999
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Editor’s Note: The President was in West Memphis, AR, on December 10, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, December 10, 1999

The President's Radio Address

December 4, 1999

Good morning. Yesterday we crossed a historic threshold with the creation of more than 20 million new jobs since January 1993. This is a great American achievement and further proof of the health of our economy, which now has given us the longest peacetime expansion in our Nation's history. Today I want to talk about a group of new workers who, just a few short years ago, were virtually locked out of our growing economy and their chance at the American dream—the more than one million Americans who are now moving from welfare to work every year.

Seven years ago I asked the American people to join me in ending welfare as we know it. In 1996, with bipartisan support, we passed a landmark welfare reform bill. Today I am pleased to announce that we've cut the rolls by more than half. Fewer Americans are on welfare today than at any time since 1969, 30 years ago. We're moving more than a million people a year from the welfare rolls to the payrolls, 1.3 million in 1998 alone. And most of the people who get jobs are keeping them. They're getting raises and paying taxes and teaching their children to honor the dignity of work.

We've changed the culture of welfare from one that fostered dependence to one that honors and rewards work. That's why I fought to create high performance bonuses for States that do the most for parents entering the work force. I am pleased to announce the first of those awards today.

Twenty-seven States will share \$200 million in bonuses for four categories: how many people they've placed in jobs; how well those people did at keeping their jobs and improving their wages; the biggest improvement in job placement; and the biggest improvement in on-the-job success. The States ranked highest were Indiana, Minnesota, Washington, and Florida. I congratulate these

States for their achievement. If every State had performed as well as Indiana in placing workers in jobs, we would have helped more than twice as many people go to work last year. I challenge every State to invest its welfare reform resources in helping people to succeed at work.

This is not just about numbers. It's about real people. People like Wendy Waxler of Washington, DC. Wendy wanted a job, but needed time to care for her daughter, who has cerebral palsy. She couldn't afford to lose the Medicaid that paid the doctor's bills. Through welfare to work, Wendy found a flexible job and kept Medicaid and food stamps, at first. Now she and her daughter have health insurance, and Wendy has new confidence and new dreams.

People like Wendy Waxler are an asset our economy simply cannot afford to waste. So we must do more to support working families and people who are trying to turn their lives around. That's why I've asked Congress to raise the minimum wage, so that a full-time job is a real ticket out of poverty; it's why we won new resources and will fight for more, for our new markets initiative, to make it easier for businesses and banks to invest in America's poorest communities; and why I'm asking Congress to increase our commitment to quality child care.

All of us have a moral responsibility to do everything we can to ensure that every eligible family receives health care and nutritional assistance, so all our children can grow up healthy. I fought hard to ensure that the welfare reform law guaranteed these critical supports. Now our administration is taking steps to hold States accountable and make sure families get the benefits they need. Today I am also announcing new performance bonuses like the ones I just awarded for States that do the best at enrolling eligible families in Medicaid and food stamps.

Finally, the old welfare system actually weakened families, by discouraging couples

from marrying or living with their children. We want to change that, so starting next year there will also be bonuses for States that do the most to get poor children into two-parent homes, where we know they have the best chance of breaking the cycle of poverty.

Supporting hard-pressed working families and helping people to make the transition from welfare to work isn't just the right thing to do; it's also the smart thing. It encourages millions of people to take responsibility for their families, their future. In so doing, it expands opportunity and strengthens our economy and builds a healthier future for all of us.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:15 p.m. on December 3 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 4. In his remarks, the President referred to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law No. 104-193. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 3 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the World Trade Organization Seattle Round

December 4, 1999

We made progress at the Seattle WTO trade meetings although significant differences remain. I remain optimistic that we can use the coming months to narrow our differences and launch a successful new round of global trade talks. A successful round will include bringing down barriers in agriculture, manufacturing, and services, keeping E-commerce tariff-free and ensuring that trade will lift living conditions for working people everywhere while protecting the environment. And, as I said in Seattle, a successful WTO must be more open and accessible to all citizens around the world.

I am determined to move forward on the path of free trade and economic growth while ensuring a human face is put on the global economy.

Statement on the Fire at the Worcester Cold Storage and Warehouse Company

December 4, 1999

Hillary and I were deeply saddened to learn of the tragedy that has struck the Worcester community. The six firefighters who are now missing and presumed dead valiantly put their lives on the line in the effort to save others and protect their city. Their courageous service reminds us all of the tremendous commitment and sacrifice made by the thousands of firefighters across America who risk their own lives every day to protect our communities. Our thoughts and prayers go out to these courageous firefighters, to their families, to the Worcester Fire Department, and the city of Worcester.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception

December 5, 1999

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you all, and welcome to the White House; to the wonderful array of artists who are in this room and members of the Cabinet and others who have come to be part of this happy evening.

We share this evening with honorees who have touched our lives and ennobled our Nation. Recently, Hillary and I went to Greece, and I had the opportunity early in the morning to go and visit the Parthenon, a magnificent, almost unbelievable architectural creation, given what had to be done to make it work and the materials and instruments that were available at the time. The Parthenon was the brainchild of the great statesman Pericles. Pericles said this to his soldiers in the Peloponnesian War: "We shall not be without witness. There are mighty monuments to our power which will make us the wonder of this and succeeding ages."

As the curtain falls on this remarkable century, at the dawn of a new millennium, it is fitting that we Americans should ask ourselves, what will be the monuments that we offer up to the gaze of succeeding ages? Today, we are blessed with unprecedented

prosperity and military might, but I believe it will be true of us, as it was Pericles' Athens, that the monuments of power that truly define, sustain us, and last throughout the ages are those that spring from the mind and the spirit.

Just as we remember the great philosophers and playwrights, the historians and architects of ancient Greece, so tonight Hillary and I are proud to welcome you here to pay tribute to these five remarkable artists and creators. They come from many places; their immense talents range over a wide creative landscape. In giving the world new ways to understand the human experience and celebrate the human spirit, they are all leaving their own enduring monuments for succeeding ages.

And now, to present them, four Americans and one Scotsman—whom tonight I declare an honorary American citizen. [Laughter] It seems appropriate to do on the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. After all, we couldn't have won the cold war without you. [Laughter]

In 1940 Borge Rosenbaum of Copenhagen sought safe passage to America, just ahead of the Nazi advance. The United States consul, who had seen his comedy show, granted him a visa on one condition: He had to promise to continue his career in America. With just \$20 in his pocket, he arrived in the United States, changed his name, and began to learn English by watching gangster films. [Laughter]

Soon, Victor Borge landed himself a regular gig on Bing Crosby's radio show. Eventually, this led to the longest running one-man show in Broadway history and 40 years of travel across America, Europe, and Asia, perfecting the fine art of playing brilliant piano in the clumsiest possible way. [Laughter]

Who would ever have thought that one person could be both a virtuoso pianist and an ingenious comic, combining the two into one mischievous, uproarious show? Perhaps the common link between Victor Borge's music and his comedy is his uncanny gift for improvisation. Once, when a pesky fly would not leave him alone, he so skillfully incorporated the fly into his performance that all

the audience were absolutely sure he had trained it to cooperate. [Laughter]

At age 90, Victor Borge continues to share his gifts with the world, not only through comedy, piano, and conducting the world's major orchestras but also through the generous scholarship fund he created in gratitude to those who risked their lives to save Scandinavia's Jews. Tonight we are deeply grateful to one long-forgotten United States consul and to the "Great Dane" who has kept America rolling with laughter for so very many years.

Ladies and gentlemen, Victor Borge.

Mr. Borge. Who was that gentleman? [Laughter]

The President. You know, you ought to hang onto that thought; in about 14 months people will be asking that question for real. [Laughter]

Steven Spielberg once said there are only seven genuine movie stars in the entire world today. Of course, his list includes Sean Connery, one of the most charismatic and commanding actors ever to arch an eyebrow on the silver screen.

He rose from humble beginnings in working class Edinburgh. Even today, under the tux he wears better than any man alive, he still sports with pride a "Scotland Forever" tattoo on his arm. He left school at age 13, helped support his family as a concrete mixer, brick layer, sailor, steel bender, coffin polisher, and weight lifter. All jobs that prepared him for a lifetime of diverse and wonderful roles.

After making 007 the most famous character in the world, Sean Connery went on to broaden his reach with brilliant performances in movies such as "The Man Who Would Be King," "The Name of the Rose," "The Russia House," and "The Untouchables," for which he was hailed as another Olivier. Among his numerous honors, he's earned an Academy Award, a British Academy Fellowship, the French Legion of Honor, Edinburgh's prestigious Freedom of the City Award, and very important to me, a fairly low handicap on the golf course. [Laughter]

To this distinguished list, tonight we add Kennedy Center Honors, and we thank him

for four decades of unforgettable, masterful contributions to the world of film.

Ladies and gentlemen, Sean Connery.

On May 4, 1971, in a 16-minute solo of indescribable beauty and emotional force, Judith Jamison vaulted into the realm of legend. The solo was called, "Cry," and Alvin Ailey created it just for her. Rarely, if ever, had the artistry of choreographer and dancer come together in such an elemental, spiritual way. In the chronicle of her career, that night was just one in a long list of soaring triumphs for Judith Jamison.

After a childhood filled with patient and exacting study of dance, her big break came in 1964. "I taught a class of ordinary students," the famed choreographer Agnes de Mille reported. "But there was this one astonishing girl." Miss de Mille brought Judith Jamison to New York to perform with the American Ballet Theatre. A year later Alvin Ailey asked her to dance with his company. For the next 15 years, she premiered new roles, set new standards of excellence, and earned unprecedented global acclaim.

Her achievements as an Ailey dancer would be enough to earn Judith Jamison a place here tonight. But she has always sought new ways to stretch and extend herself and those around her. From the Ailey Company, she went on to star on Broadway, choreograph modern dance and opera, and found her own dance company.

In 1989 she returned to the Ailey Company to take over as artistic director and fulfill her mentor's dying wish. In this role, she has preserved Ailey's legacy while creating transcendent new works, cultivating a new generation of stars, bringing dance "back to the people," in her words, and I might add, greatly inspiring many of our daughters.

Tonight we thank her for a lifetime of breaking down barriers and forever lifting up the grace and beauty of American dance.

Ladies and gentlemen, Judith Jamison.

After 6 years in the Navy during World War II, a sailor named Jason Robards, Jr., used the GI bill to enroll in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. He got some parts and drove a cab to support his family. Then, at the age of 33, he auditioned for the lead in "The Iceman Cometh," with the esteemed director Jose Quintero. From the

moment Robards began to read, the part simply belonged to him. As Quintero later remarked, "I came to see that Jason was the greatest young actor in the world."

Jason Robards' authority as an artist only grew with age. After his chilling performance in "Iceman," he starred in the Broadway premier of O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night," securing his standing as the finest interpreter of our finest playwright.

He went on to earn the highest honors on the world's great stages, including, of course, the Kennedy Center, where he presided at the groundbreaking and shined in the very first play the center produced. Of course, he has also enjoyed remarkable success as a screen actor and won back-to-back Academy Awards.

But performing under the stagelights of the theater, drawing us into the shadows and, occasionally, even into the sunshine, has always been his first love. He took possession of the American theater in 1956, and he has worked and reigned there, magnificent and vulnerable, ever since.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jason Robards, Jr.

When Stevie Wonder was a baby in inner-city Detroit, his mother dreamed of carrying her son to the Holy City of Jerusalem in hopes that he would gain his sight. What she could not yet know was that her child had already been profoundly blessed—blessed with prodigious, awe-inspiring inner vision, and musical talents that must have come from the Almighty Himself.

By the age of 8, Stevie was composing for piano and mastering the harmonica and drums. At age 13, he got the world clapping and stomping with his breakout single, "Fingertips Part 2." His very first record went gold. At the ripe old age of 18, he came out with his first album of greatest hits. [*Laughter*]

We all know Stevie's songs, and we all try to sing them. [*Laughter*] Even for those of us who sing off key, they're all in the "Key of Life." At times, his songs seem to be in the very air we breathe, always part of the sunshine of our lives.

Over these past 30 years, as he has composed and performed these songs, Stevie has also helped to make Dr. King's birthday into a national holiday, to tear down the walls of

apartheid, to alleviate hunger, to stem youth violence, and, in so many other ways, to compose the remaining passages of Dr. King's unfinished symphony. Along the way, I might add, he has also been a perfectly wonderful friend to Hillary and to me and to Vice President and Mrs. Gore, for which we are very grateful.

So tonight we honor the prodigy who became a prophet, for using his divine gifts to move the world to sing and to act.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Stevie Wonder.

Well, there they are, ladies and gentlemen, Victor Borge, Sean Connery, Judith Jamison, Jason Robards, and Stevie Wonder. In them we find comic invention, rugged strength, towering grace, inner fire, and music that flows down like a mighty stream. Tonight the United States salutes them all.

God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to movie director/producer Steven Spielberg. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at the Presentation of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights

December 6, 1999

The President. Thank you very much, Belquis. Congressmen Gilman, Lewis, Jackson Lee; Reverend and Mrs. Jackson; Deputy Attorney General Holder; Harold Koh; Bob Seiple; Julia Taft; Hattie Babbitt; Bette Bao Lord, thank you for coming back.

School Shooting in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma

Ladies and gentlemen, before I begin, I need—because this is my only opportunity before the press today just to say a brief word about this school shooting this morning in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms are on the scene now working with the local authorities. I expect to get a detailed briefing shortly. Meanwhile,

our prayers are with each of the children and their families, and the entire Fort Gibson community is—right now there are no fatalities, only people who are wounded, and we hope and pray it will stay that way.

Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights

It occurs to me that at some point tonight someone will be doing what some of us—Hillary says it's mostly a male thing—somebody will be channel-surfing tonight. [Laughter] And they will just come upon Belquis speaking. And they may stop and listen, or they may not. They may know what the Taliban is, or they may not. But I wonder if even someone who hears her will recognize that in nearly half the world today—in spite of the fact that for the first time in history more than half the people of the world live under governments of their own choosing—in nearly half the world, doing what Belquis just did, simply standing up and speaking freely, could get her arrested, jailed, beaten, even tortured. That's why we're here today.

I wonder if someone who just happened along her remarks tonight would understand that until people like Eleanor Roosevelt came along, the rest of the world didn't even recognize that the right to speak out is more than something enshrined in the American Constitution. It is truly an international human right.

Sometimes we forget how long it took the world to agree on a common definition, a universal declaration of what freedom actually means. Half a century ago the Universal Declaration on Human Rights said it in very simple words: "All human beings are free and equal in dignity and human rights. All have the right to life, liberty, and security. All are endowed with reason and conscience. All have the right to a standard of living adequate to health and well-being."

The real genius of the Declaration of Human Rights is that it affirmed that basic human rights are not cultural, but universal; that what a country does to people within its own borders is not its business alone, but the business of all of us. We in the United States know how hard it is to achieve the aspirations of that declaration. We've been living with it since our Founders, and living

with our flaws in failing to meet up to its standards.

A hundred years ago Eleanor Roosevelt was a 15-year-old girl growing up in a country where women could not vote. Half a century ago, if the standards of the Universal Declaration were held up to segregated schools and lunch counters in the United States, we would have failed the test resoundingly.

This century has taught us that even though human rights are endowed by the hand of our Creator, they are ensured by the hearts and hands of men and women among us who cannot bear to see it otherwise. Inch by inch, such people have moved the world forward. Today we honor five brave Americans whose lives have made a difference. And we ask that all of us remember, in their triumphs, the struggles of people like Belquis, the continuing tensions in Africa, the continuing tensions in the Balkans, and elsewhere in the world where human rights are not yet secure.

It is said that when Burke Marshall first met Robert Kennedy, they sat across a table for 10 minutes and didn't say a single word. Those of us who had Burke Marshall in law school can believe that story. [*Laughter*] Perhaps now he will tell us who spoke first. But from that silent moment sprang a truly extraordinary partnership.

As Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division in the Kennedy administration, Burke Marshall was a bridge between Government and those activists fighting every day to end Jim Crow. Congressman John Lewis, who received this award last year, once recalled that whenever Martin Luther King or James Farmer needs to talk to somebody in Washington—needed to talk to someone in Washington, they would simply say, “call Burke.”

His work was crucial to passing the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. After he had helped shape a new America, he later worked equally hard to shape young minds at Yale Law School.

I made a joke about Hillary and I being students. But I can tell you, I never will forget the first time I saw him. And I imagined how this man of slight stature and such a modest demeanor could almost shake with his passion for justice. It was quite something

to see for the first time, and we are all in his debt.

When Leon Sullivan was 8 years old, he walked into a grocery store, slapped a nickel on the counter and said, “I want a Coke.” The place being in segregated South Carolina, the shopkeeper threw him out. That moment was the beginning of his life's work. The pastor of two churches by the time he was at the ripe old age of 17, Reverend Sullivan went on to write the “Sullivan Principles,” which called upon companies all around the world to act in a socially responsible manner. By compelling dozens of businesses to desegregate their plants in South Africa, his work helped to pull down apartheid.

Today, as the author of the new “Global Sullivan Principle,” Leon Sullivan is still changing the world. He's too big for anyone to deny him a Coke—[*laughter*]*—*but he has helped to win that right for millions of others who aren't so large.

Reverend Sullivan, thank you for keeping your eyes on the prize for nearly 80 years now. Thank you.

For those of you who wonder from time to time about whether there really could be a divine plan guiding our lives, consider this: In Spanish, the name, Dolores Huerta, means “sorrowful orchard.” But if Dolores has her way, her name will be the only sorrowful orchard left in America.

She began her career teaching young migrant children but couldn't stand seeing them come to class hungry. So in 1962 she and Cesar Chavez cofounded the United Farm Workers. While Cesar Chavez worked the fields, she worked the boardrooms and the statehouses, negotiating contracts and fighting for laws that lifted the lives of thousands and thousands of Americans. In the process, she found time to raise 11 children.

Dolores, we thank you for all you have done and all you still do to promote the dignity and human rights of your family and America's family. Thank you.

It is no accident that when America opened its arms to Kosovar Albanians early this year, one of the first calls that went out was to a Dominican nun in the Fordham section of the Bronx. Scripture tells us that “if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry

and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your life will rise in the darkness and your night will become like noonday." If that is true, there are few people who live their lives in more sunshine than Sister Jean Marshall.

Disturbed by the sight of refugee families picking up garbage off the street to feed their children, in 1983 Sister Jean founded St. Rita's Center for Immigrant and Refugee Services. In the days since, it has helped thousands of refugees, from Vietnam to Cambodia to Bosnia, to find jobs, learn English, live better lives.

Sister Jean, we thank you for all you are doing to make our democracy real and dreams come true for thousands who flee human rights abuses and come here expecting the Statue of Liberty to live up to her promise. Thank you.

Lastly, there are few people who have done more to directly build on Eleanor Roosevelt's work on women's rights around the world than Charlotte Bunch. Gloria Steinem once observed that for every question that comes up regarding women's rights, sooner or later someone asks, what does Charlotte think? [*Laughter*]

As the founder of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, she has worked to build a worldwide network of activists. As a result, when the World Conference on Human Rights was held in Vienna in 1993, for the first time there was a network in place to raise international awareness of issues like violence against women and gay and lesbian issues. And for the first time, the U.N. acknowledged that women's rights are human rights.

Today I think the best way to thank Charlotte Bunch is for the Senate to finally ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Thank you.

We honor these five Americans today with the thanks of a grateful nation. But let me say again, to echo what Hillary said earlier, if we truly want to honor their work, we must stay committed in the places where the glory has not come and continue to speak out for human rights around the world, from Burma to Cuba to Sudan, from Serbia to North Korea and Vietnam. We must do so because

it's the right thing to do and the surest path to a world that is safe, democratic, and free.

In Afghanistan, we have strongly condemned the Taliban's despicable treatment of women and girls. We have worked with the United Nations to impose sanctions against that Taliban, while ensuring that the Afghan people continue to receive humanitarian assistance. We are Afghanistan's strongest critic, but also its largest humanitarian donor.

And today we take another step forward. I am pleased to announce that we will spend, next year, at least \$2 million to educate and improve the health of Afghan women and children refugees. We are also making an additional \$1½ million available in emergency aid for those displaced by the recent Taliban offensive. And we're dramatically expanding our resettlement program for women and children who are not safe where they are.

But, as Belquis said, these are but temporary solutions. The Taliban must stop violating the rights of women and respect the human rights of all people. And we must continue to work until the day when Afghanistan has a government that reflects the wisdom of its people.

The whole world is also concerned about the plight of innocent people in Chechnya. Two weeks ago, at the OSCE Summit in Turkey, I raised the issue directly with President Yeltsin. The people of Chechnya are in a terrible position, beleaguered by paramilitary groups and terrorists on the one hand and the Russian offensive on the other. I made clear that Russia's fight against terrorism is right, but the methods being used in Chechnya are wrong. And I am convinced they are counterproductive.

We've seen rocket and artillery attacks on largely civilian areas, with heavy losses of life and at least 200,000 people pushed from their homes. I'm deeply disturbed by reports that suggest that innocent Chechens will continue to bear the brunt of this war, and not the militants Russia is fighting.

Russia has set a deadline for all inhabitants, now, to leave Grozny or face the consequences. That means that there is a threat to the lives of the old, the infirm, the injured people, and other innocent civilians who simply cannot leave or are too scared to leave

their homes. Russia will pay a heavy price for those actions with each passing day, sinking more deeply into a morass that will intensify extremism and diminish its own standing in the world.

Another country about which we must continue to express concern is China. China is progressing and opening to the world in many ways that are welcome, including its entry into the WTO. Yet its progress is still being held back by the Government's response to those who test the limits of freedom. A troubling example, of course, is the detention by Chinese authorities, of adherents of the Falun Gong movement.

Its targets are not political dissidents, and their practices and beliefs are unfamiliar to us. But the principle still, surely, must be the same: freedom of conscience and freedom of association. And our interest, surely, must be the same: seeing China maintain stability and growth at home by meeting, not stifling, the growing demands of its people for openness and accountability.

For all these challenges, we have to say that we enter the new millennium more hopeful than we have been at any time in the past century. The second half of this century began with delegates from 18 nations, including the United States, coming together to write the Universal Declaration. The century ends with 18 nations having come together with the United States to reaffirm those basic rights in Kosovo—with progress from Indonesia and East Timor to Nigeria.

Now, as I've said, more than half the world's people live under governments of their own choosing. Shortly before the Congress went home, the United States Senate unanimously ratified the International Convention against Child Labor, and I became the third head of state to sign the convention. We are moving, but we have much to do as we enter a new century. And again I would say to my fellow Americans, we all know that our efforts have to begin at home.

On the 10th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt dedicated a book called "In Your Hands." On that day she said—and I quote—human rights begin "In small places, close to home . . . Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.

Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Today we honor that message by honoring five people whose work close to home has made the whole world a better place. May their work continue to inspire us all for generations yet to come.

Lieutenant Colonel, read the citations.

[*At this point, Lt. Col. Carlton D. Everhart, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President and First Lady presented the awards.*]

The President. Thank you for coming. Thank you for honoring these great people. Thank you for reminding us of all the important work still to be done, Belquis.

We're adjourned. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:17 p.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Afghan refugee Belquis Ahmadi, who introduced the President; Rev. Jesse Jackson, civil rights leader, and his wife, Jacqueline; Commissioner Harold H. Koh, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Robert A. Seiple; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Statement on Signing the Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999

December 6, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign S. 580, the "Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999," which authorizes appropriations for the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (and renames it the "Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality") and authorizes a new grant program to support children's hospitals with graduate medical education programs.

This legislation combines two important health care priorities of my Administration: first, ensuring that our Nation's children, especially those who suffer from complex or unusual diseases, continue to receive the highest quality care that our health care system can provide; and second, developing the scientific evidence that we need to improve

the quality and safety of our health care system.

The Act takes an important first step to ensure the delivery of high quality health care for America's children by investing Federal funds in graduate medical education at freestanding children's hospitals. This long overdue initiative was included in my Administration's FY 2000 budget and was strongly advocated by the First Lady. Her leadership in this area is longstanding, and it is with great pride that I sign this groundbreaking legislation.

In an increasingly competitive health care market dominated by managed care, teaching hospitals struggle to cover the significant costs associated with training and research as private reimbursements decline. Millions of American children each year are treated by physicians affiliated with or trained in one of 60 independent children's hospitals across the country. While other teaching hospitals receive support for these costs through Medicare, children's hospitals receive virtually no Federal funds, even though they train nearly 30 percent of the Nation's pediatricians and nearly 50 percent of all pediatric specialists. This inequity exacerbates an already difficult financial situation for children's hospitals, which often serve the poorest, sickest, and most vulnerable children. In many cases, they provide the regional safety net for children, regardless of medical or economic need, and they are the major centers of research on children's health problems.

This Act creates a new grant program to provide much-needed support for the training of these critical health providers. I am pleased that the Consolidated Appropriations Act that I recently approved included my full \$40 million request to get this program started.

The Act also authorizes appropriations through 2005 for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and represents the culmination of a genuine bipartisan effort to make better information available to health care decisionmakers to use to

improve health care. AHRQ will help close the numerous data gaps throughout the health care delivery system. It will also serve as a bridge between the best science in the world with the best health care in the world.

The AHRQ will build on the foundation of strong scientific approaches to health services research established by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. This legislation was passed on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis by the Congress, which is a tribute to the many members of both chambers, from both sides of the aisle. I particularly want to single out Senators Frist and Kennedy and Congressmen Bliley, Dingell, Bilirakis, and Brown, who have championed quality information for quality health care, for their commitment to this important reauthorization.

The AHRQ is now designated the lead Federal agency in health care quality to help meet the needs of decisionmakers and work in partnership with the private sector. AHRQ will develop a national report on quality, stimulate evidence-based medicine, sponsor primary care research, help eliminate medical errors, and apply the power of information systems and technology in a manner that assures adequate patient privacy protections. AHRQ will also be a principal source of research that will guide health plans, purchasers, health care systems, clinicians, and policymakers as they seek to improve access to health care and make it affordable for all Americans.

I am delighted to sign S. 580, which will support research needed to improve health care and help train new pediatricians and pediatric sub-specialists who will be able to put this knowledge to work for America's children.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 6, 1999.

NOTE: S. 580, approved December 6, was assigned Public Law No. 106-129.

Proclamation 7258—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 1999

December 6, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

President Carter once said, “America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense, it’s the other way around. Human rights invented America.” Human rights have been an integral part of America’s history since the birth of our Nation more than two centuries ago. Refusing to accept tyranny and oppression, our founders secured a better way of life with our Constitution and Bill of Rights. These revolutionary documents have continued to protect our cherished freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly and to preserve the principles of equality, liberty, and justice that lie at the heart of our national identity.

As Americans, we have always strived to advance these rights and values both at home and abroad, and just as our founders sought a brighter future for our Nation, we envision a better future for our world. One of our most powerful tools in realizing that vision has been the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations General Assembly approved in December of 1948. It is not surprising that this document, which owed so much to the courage, imagination, and leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, reaffirms in tone, thought, and language our own great charters of freedom. To honor Mrs. Roosevelt’s legacy, and to acknowledge those who follow her example of commitment to human rights around the world, last year we established the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights.

In the 51 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the United Nations has developed numerous legal instruments that specify the rights and obligations contained in the document, and the international community has made encouraging progress toward improving human rights for people of all nations. Today, more individuals than ever before are living in representative democracies where they can exercise their right

to freely choose their own government. The international community responded vigorously to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and is helping the people of East Timor not only to achieve legal recognition of their independence but also to develop the institutions they need to thrive as an independent and secure state. But despite this heartening progress, there are still many regions of the world where human rights are daily denied and aspirations to freedom routinely crushed. Our work is still far from complete.

Rising to these challenges, we in the United States have strengthened our commitment to improving international human rights. To enable the world community to react more quickly to genocidal conditions, we have established a genocide early warning system. We continue to fund nongovernmental organizations that respond rapidly to human rights emergencies. And we have created an interagency working group to help implement the human rights treaties we have already ratified and to make recommendations on treaties we have yet to ratify.

We also continue to be a world leader in the fight to eliminate exploitative and abusive child labor. Last week, I signed the instrument of ratification of the International Labor Organization’s Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, declaring on behalf of the American people that we simply will not tolerate child slavery, the sale or trafficking of children, child prostitution or pornography, forced or compulsory child labor, and hazardous work that harms the health, safety, and morals of children. Through these and other initiatives, America continues to reaffirm both at home and across the globe our fundamental belief in human dignity and our unchanging reverence for human rights.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 1999, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1999, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1999, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate activities, ceremonies, and

programs that demonstrate our national commitment to the Bill of Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and promotion and protection of human rights for all people.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 8, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 9.

Remarks on Improving Health Care Quality and Ensuring Patient Safety and an Exchange With Reporters

December 7, 1999

The President. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to thank Secretary Herman, Janice Lachance, and the other representatives of the Federal Government who are here. I'd like to thank the leaders representing consumers, health care providers, business, labor, and quality experts who are here. This is a very impressive group of Americans who have come together to discuss the question of reducing medical errors.

Last week the Institute of Medicine released a disturbing report about patient safety and medical errors in our Nation's health care system. According to the study, as many as 98,000 Americans lose their lives each year as a result of preventable medical errors. Up to 7,000 die because of errors in prescribing medicine. And the cost of all these errors add as much as \$29 billion to our medical bills.

But this is about far more than dollars or statistics. It's about the toll that such errors take on people's lives and on their faith in our health care system. We just had a terrific meeting this morning to talk about what we can do to save lives, to prevent errors, to promote patient safety. We have the finest health care system in the world, the best professionals to deliver that care. But too many

families have been the victims of medical errors that are avoidable, mistakes that are preventable, tragedies, therefore, that are unacceptable.

Everyone here agrees that our health care system does wonders but first must do no harm. Now let me be clear about one thing: Ensuring patient safety is not about fixing blame; it's about fixing problems in an increasingly complex system, about creating a culture of safety and an environment where medical errors are not tolerated. In short, it's about working together to zero in on patient safety and zero out preventable errors. This morning's meeting builds on our administration's longstanding record to improve health care quality.

Almost 3 years ago, I established the Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality Care, chaired by Secretary Shalala and Secretary Herman. That commission produced a landmark report and led to my own executive action to provide patient protections to one out of every three Americans enrolled in Federal health care plans. It also set the stage for the Congress to pass a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights.

But the Commission has made clear that the challenge goes beyond patient protections for all Americans in all plans. We must also improve the quality of care. That's why I created an interagency task force to coordinate administration efforts in this area; why I asked the Vice President to launch the Quality Forum—and I thank Dr. Ken Kizer for being here today—a private advisory panel to develop uniform quality standards so that health plans compete on quality and not just cost, and consumers and businesses have better tools to judge what plans are best for them.

In a few moments, I'll announce new steps our administration is taking to promote quality and to reduce medical errors. But first, I want to turn it over to one of our partners in that effort. If there is one thing we have learned, it's that effectively managing the prescribing and dispensing of drugs is one of the best ways we can improve quality and hold down cost. The president of the American Hospital Association, Dick Davidson, is here this morning, to announce a major new medical safety campaign they're launching

with the Institution for Safe Medication Practices. It's truly a prescription for better health for all Americans. So I'd like to ask Dick to tell you about it.

[At this point, Richard J. Davidson, president, American Hospital Association, made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you very much, Dick.

I also want to just take a moment out here to thank Dr. Bill Richardson of the Kellogg Foundation for the Institute of Medicine report, and all those others who worked with him on it. It was a terrific document.

Now, let's talk about what we can do at the Federal level. First, I'm signing an executive memorandum this morning directing our health care quality task force to analyze the Institute of Medicine study and to report back to me, through the Vice President, within 60 days about the ways we can implement their recommendations.

I'm also calling on the task force to evaluate the extent to which medical errors are caused by misuse of medications and medical devices and to develop additional strategies to reduce these errors.

Second, I want the Federal Government to lead by example. So I'm instructing the Government agencies that administer health plans for 85 million Americans to take an inventory of the good ideas out there now to reduce medical errors. They should apply those techniques to the health programs they administer and do so in a way that protects patient privacy.

As a first step, I'm announcing today that each of the more than 300 private health plans participating in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program now will be required to institute quality improvement and patient safety initiatives. And I want to thank Janice Lachance, the head of our Office of Personnel Management, who had responsibility for figuring out how we were going to do this in record time. [Laughter]

Third, ongoing research to enhance patient safety, to reduce patient errors, is absolutely critical. So we're increasing our investment in this area. Yesterday I signed legislation reauthorizing the Agency for Health Care Quality and Research in providing \$25

million for research to improve health care quality and prevent medical errors. Through the work of the agency, we're also engaging our partners at the State level.

In March we'll convene the first national conference with State health officials to promote best practices in preventing medical errors. And I want to thank Dr. John Eisenberg for his leadership of that agency.

Finally, I'm directing my budget and health care teams to develop quality and patient safety initiatives for next year's budget so that we can ensure we're doing all we can to combat this problem. I want next year's budget to provide the largest investment to eliminate medical errors, improve quality, and enhance patient safety we've ever offered.

The Institute of Medicine's report makes clear that a systematic approach to reducing medical errors gives us the best chance of success. Years ago, we took that approach in aviation, and we've dramatically reduced errors and saved lives. By working together, we can achieve the same goals in the health care industry. The American people deserve this, and we intend to provide it.

I am committed to working with all these people in partnership to do our part to save lives in needless medical errors, to make the best health care system in the world even better in the new century.

Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, many Americans, I would venture to say, were shocked, probably, to hear about this report, to learn that tens of thousands of people die each year, and tens of thousands more are injured because of medical errors. Does it call into question whether or not we have the best health care system in the world?

The President. No, I don't think it does. I think what it calls into question is whether we've done everything we can to invest the kind of money in avoiding errors that other big complex systems have.

I mentioned aviation, but I might also point out workplace safety. We have a representative from General Motors here who talked about how dramatically they have reduced injury in the workplace. Or if I could use an analogy that I think is, in some ways, even more appropriate, in the 1980's, when

the American manufacturing sector was under withering competition from overseas and burdened by our big debt and high interest rates, they underwent the most disciplined imaginable review of every single process in every complex manufacturing operation to go to a zero error rate.

If you look at the medical profession, if you look at the way hospitals work, if you think—Dick said tens of millions of people—I'm sure there are hundreds of millions of hospital visits every year—just to take hospitals. There are many people who are older who are taking multiple medications, who go to multiple doctors, so that what happens is, you've got a very complex set of processes that, as we have gotten to live longer, have become more complex and even more interactions. And what we need to do is to take—step back and take a critical look at each and every step along the way.

There have been big changes in the roles that various people in the health care system play. Have they all been properly trained to play that role? Do they all check with each other? Are there the right kind of teams in place in every health care setting that work for safety? These are the kinds of questions that we have invested more money and time and research in, in the workplace and when we fly on airplanes, than we have in the health care arena. And we just have to do that now.

The good news about this is, this is something we can do something about. But if you ask me, does it mean we don't have the best health care system in the world, I would say, no, it doesn't mean that. Keep in mind, the life expectancy now is, what, over 76 years; anybody who lives to be 65 in America has a life expectancy in excess of 82 years. And when we finish the mapping of the human genome, I think sometime early in the next century, we'll look at babies being born that have a life expectancy of nearly 100 years.

So I think that this is just a problem that—I applaud the lack of defensiveness that all the players in the health care system have displayed here. I applaud the report. And we know what the dimensions of this problem are, and now we've got the people in place with the determination to solve it. And I think that we ought to look at this as a very

positive event in the progress of American health care.

Q. Mr. President—

Elían Gonzalez

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]—to President Castro's threats of retaliation against the U.S. unless that Cuban boy is returned?

The President. I will do a press conference tomorrow, and I'll answer all those other questions. I'm looking forward to it.

Health Care Quality

Q. Speaking of lack of defensiveness, should the White House have spotted this problem of medical errors sooner and taken action sooner? And also, isn't this a problem, now, for hospitals and other medical providers, because if they take action to remedy past mistakes, they admit past mistakes, and couldn't they be open to lawsuits?

The President. Well, first of all, I think there has been a lot of work on this over the last 3 years. But I don't think there's any question that the Institute of Medicine report, with its actual calculation of the numbers of lives lost, has focused everybody's attention more on this, including me. And I think the only productive thing to do is to look forward now.

Secondly, when this report came out, I learned that 22 States—if you look at what the report recommends, it recommends mandatory reporting of serious mistakes and errors. And 22 States have that in place and presumably don't have any more significant lawsuit or medical malpractice problems than the rest of the country as a whole.

And regardless—you know, once you know about a problem, you're under a moral obligation to deal with it. So you can't—whatever the consequences are, we have to go forward.

Finally, I do not believe that the kind of systematic improvement in safety training and processes, hospital after hospital after hospital, clinic after clinic after clinic, and in outpatient settings, will increase liability. No one can begrudge the improvement of processes. That still won't establish or fail to establish liability in a particular case. So I don't see that as a problem.

But whatever the problems are, they're not nearly as important as saving thousands and

thousands of lives that obviously are there to be saved now. And that's what all these people behind us are saying. And I think they reflect the overwhelming views of doctors, hospitals, nurses, and everybody else in the health care system.

So this is a good day for America, not only because of this report but because of the response to this report.

Thank you very much, and I'll see you tomorrow.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., president and chief executive officer, National Quality Forum; and William Richardson, president and chief executive officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and chair, Institute of Medicine Committee on Quality of Health Care in America. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mr. Davidson.

Memorandum on Improving Health Care Quality and Ensuring Patient Safety

December 7, 1999

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management

Subject: Improving Health Care Quality and Ensuring Patient Safety: Directive to the Quality Interagency Coordination Task Force (QuIC)

Assuring quality through patient protection is a long-standing priority for my Administration. Over the past 2 years, with the leadership of the Vice President, Secretary Shalala, and Secretary Herman, my Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry (Quality Commission) produced a landmark report on health care quality. Through executive action, I extended the patient protection provisions outlined in this report to the 85 million Americans enrolled in Federal health plans, setting the stage for the Congress to pass a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. As important as putting patient protections

in place, however, is improving the quality of the services available to these patients.

The United States has some of the finest medical institutions and best trained health care professionals in the world. However, as the Quality Commission reported last year, millions of Americans are harmed or even killed each year as a result of inappropriate or erroneous medical treatment. These health care quality problems include the underutilization of needed services, the overutilization of unnecessary services, and medical errors in the delivery of care. In addition, there is a continuing pattern of wide variation in health care practice.

As a recent Institute of Medicine study confirms, preventable medical errors present an example of the critical importance of improving the quality of health care in our Nation. Over half of the adverse medical events that occur each year are preventable, causing the deaths of as many as 98,000 Americans annually and adding as much as \$29 billion to our Nation's health care spending. These errors also deeply affect the lives of many individuals and families and the trust of the American people in the quality of the care they receive.

To build on the initial efforts of the Quality Commission and the leadership of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Defense, the Office of Personnel Management, and other agencies in implementing a range of quality improvement initiatives, I directed the establishment of the Quality Interagency Coordination Task Force to help coordinate Administration efforts in this area. I also asked the Vice President to help launch the National Forum for Health Care Quality Measurement and Reporting (Quality Forum). This broad-based, widely representative private advisory body, which includes senior government participants, is developing standard quality measurement tools to help all purchasers, providers, and consumers of health care better evaluate and ensure the delivery of quality services.

In addition to the work and significant potential of the QuIC and Quality Forum, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense have been leaders in employing information technology to enhance their ability to

provide a higher quality of care to patients. Moreover, the Food and Drug Administration is working to implement new reporting systems that allow for a rapid response to medical errors causing patient injury. However, despite all the progress that has been made, it is clear that more must be done.

Recent advances in technology and information systems can help eliminate dangerous medical errors, lower costs by improving communications between doctors, eliminate redundant tests and procedures, and build automatic safeguards against harmful drug interactions and other adverse side effects into the treatment process. Despite this fact, very few public and private health plans, hospitals, and employers appropriately use these new techniques.

Therefore, I hereby direct the Quality Interagency Coordination Task Force, to report to me a set of recommendations on specific actions to improve health care outcomes and prevent medical errors in both the public and private sectors in a manner that is consistent with the strong privacy protections we have proposed. This report shall:

- Identify prevalent threats to patient safety and medical errors that can be prevented through the use of decision support systems, such as patient monitoring and reminder systems;
- Evaluate the feasibility and advisability of the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine's Quality of Health Care in America Committee on patient safety;
- Identify additional strategies to reduce medical errors and ensure patient safety in Federal health care programs;
- Evaluate the extent to which medical errors are caused by misuse of medications and medical devices and consider steps to strengthen the Food and Drug Administration's surveillance and response system to reduce their incidence; and
- Identify opportunities for the Federal Government to take specific action to improve patient safety and health care quality nationwide through collaboration with the private sector, including the National Forum for Health Care Quality Measurement and Reporting.

I direct the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor to serve as the coordinating agencies to assist in the development and integration of recommendations and to report back to me within 60 days. The recommended actions should lay the foundation for a national system that prevents adverse medical events before they occur.

William J. Clinton

Proclamation 7259—National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 1999

December 7, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Early on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, the 130 vessels of the U.S. Pacific Fleet lay quiet and serene in Pearl Harbor. Americans sailors were preparing to raise colors, unaware that the worst naval disaster in American history was about to unfold. As the first wave of Japanese planes dropped torpedo bombs on the fleet, all eight battleships along with three destroyers and three light cruisers were hit. Two hours after the first Japanese bomber hit its target, 21 ships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet lay sunk or badly damaged. U.S. aircraft losses included 188 planes destroyed and another 159 damaged. Before the bombing was over, some 3,500 Americans had been killed or injured. The sinking of the battleship USS ARIZONA remains the most recognized symbol of that tragic day. Of the ARIZONA's crew, 1,177 were killed, nearly half of all the deaths suffered at Pearl Harbor.

Time has not dimmed our memory of the ferocity of that attack 58 years ago or the pain of the losses we suffered. The assault brought shock and grief not only to the families and loved ones of those who were injured or lost their lives, but also to our entire country.

The attack on Pearl Harbor shook our Nation but strengthened our resolve. Two days later, in a Fireside Chat, President Roosevelt affirmed that resolve in explaining America's sudden thrust into World War II: "We don't

like it—we didn't want to get in it—but we are in it and we're going to fight it with everything we've got. We are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows." Just as the American forces at Pearl Harbor responded to the attack with great courage, the United States responded with determination that this assault would not keep us from victory over the Axis powers. Union leaders agreed not to strike for the duration of the war as President Roosevelt garnered the support of our working men and women to increase war production and build our "Arsenal of Democracy." Millions of American patriots joined the Armed Forces, willing to serve and sacrifice in the cause of freedom.

Rising from the destruction at Pearl Harbor, all but three of the ships sunk there were repaired and put back into service. Less than 4 years later, the Pacific Fleet sailed victoriously into Tokyo Bay. Today, the Battleship Missouri Memorial is docked on Pearl Harbor's Battleship Row, a fitting tribute to our triumph in World War II. It was Pearl Harbor that cemented the United States resolve to win the war, and it was aboard the "Mighty Mo" that the Japanese signed surrender documents in 1945, and peace in the Pacific was finally realized.

Pearl Harbor is both a reminder of what can happen when we are unprepared and a call for continuing vigilance in defense of our Nation. The world has changed greatly since that dark day more than half a century ago, but our need to remain engaged is more crucial than ever. We must never forget the lessons of Pearl Harbor or the courage, determination, and indomitable spirit of that generation of Americans who recovered from a devastating defeat to win the ultimate victory for freedom, democracy, and peace.

The Congress, by Public Law 103-308, has designated December 7, 1999, as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 1999, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in honor of the Americans who served at Pearl Harbor. I also ask all Federal depart-

ments and agencies, organizations, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff on this day in honor of those Americans who died as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 8, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 9.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Tim Johnson

December 7, 1999

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, I'm honored to be here. I was trying to think of some one thing I could say that would illustrate the esteem in which I hold Tim Johnson and Barbara, and how valuable they are to the United States Senate. And I think that the best example is that Pat Moynihan and I are here, and we're not running for anything. [Laughter] We're here because we like and admire Tim Johnson, and we think he should be reelected, and we appreciate what he's done.

I enjoyed meeting all of you when you went through the line and we had a chance to visit. A lot of you expressed various concerns, which I appreciate. I want to thank Vic Fazio and Jim Slattery for coming. They served in the House with Tim; they were there when I became President. And I want to thank all of you for being here.

I just want to say a couple of serious words in this holiday season. First, our country is greatly blessed. We have been very fortunate. Last week I announced that we went over 20 million jobs since January of 1993, the most rapid job growth we've ever had and the longest peacetime economic expansion in our history.

It is now commonly agreed that the strength and the duration of this expansion

was propelled by the 1993 vote that Congress took on a strict party line vote, much to my regret, in favor of the economic package I presented, which reduced the deficit dramatically, put us in a position to pass the Balanced Budget Act of '97, and has now given us the first back-to-back surpluses we've had in 42 years, low interest rates, high investment, and an amazing run of economic growth.

Tim Johnson was in the House. He knew he wanted to run for the Senate. It was an immensely controversial vote. Everybody that took it was told by our Republican friends that it would bring the economy crashing down and be the end of civilization as we knew it. And they were wrong, and he was right. But he couldn't have known at the time, when he put his political life on the line, that it would all come out the way it has. And I wouldn't be here, if for no other reason than that. If it hadn't been for his vote—we passed it by one vote in the House and the Senate—if it hadn't been for his vote, we wouldn't be here tonight. And if we were here, we wouldn't be nearly so well off as most of you are. So thank you, Senator, for what you did.

I also want to thank Tim for his devotion to using this moment, which is truly remarkable. At least in my lifetime, our country has never had these conditions where we've had as much economic prosperity and as much social progress. In addition to the economic statistics, which you all know, we have a 25-year low in crime, a 30-year low in welfare rolls, a 20-year low in poverty; the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded; the lowest female unemployment rate in America in 40 years; the lowest poverty rate among—single-parent households poverty rate in 40 years. We are moving forward. And this is the first time we've ever had these conditions with the absence of internal crisis and external threat.

And I think it imposes a great challenge on us, because very often individuals, families, businesses, and nations are most likely to mess up at times of great prosperity and high comfort, because it's easy to be distracted, it's easy to be divided, it's easy to take your eye off the ball.

You know, Samuel Johnson said that nothing concentrates the mind so much as the prospect of your own destruction. The flip side of that is also true: It's easy to lose your concentration when things are going very well. And I just want to say to all of you, I think it's very important that we look at the big challenges facing this country: that we save Social Security beyond the life of the baby boom generation; that we extend the life of Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit to the 75 percent of our seniors that don't have adequate prescription drug coverage; that we do something to give economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind in this country, like the Native Americans in Senator Johnson's home State that he has shown such remarkable concern for; that we deal with the long-term challenges of the environment in a way that continues to grow this economy—a lot of you are involved in that; I talked to some of you about ethanol production tonight; we're about to get the science worked out—we get the technology worked out to reduce the number of gallons of gasoline it takes to make more gallons of ethanol—you're going to see an explosion there that will change the whole economic and environmental future of the United States—that we continue to press for peace and reconciliation and the reduction of the threats of weapons of mass destruction around the world.

Many people here tonight are Pakistani-Americans. I told somebody about 4 months ago that we were making progress on peace in Ireland, progress on peace in the Middle East, progress on peace in the Balkans. But the two places that I have been stymied, since I became President, were in relationships between Greece and Turkey and relationships between India and Pakistan. And just a couple of weeks ago the Greeks and the Turks announced they were going to have talks on Cyprus, and in a few days they're going to meet and discuss whether they will accept Turkey as a candidate for the European Union. So that leaves Kashmir. *[Laughter]*

And let me say to all of you, and to my good friend Senator Moynihan, who, in one

of his many former lives, was our Ambassador to India—I have told many people this—of all the hundreds—we literally have in America now representatives of well over 150 different ethnic groups, I think something like 185—in education and income, Pakistanis and Indians rank in the top five. They often meet together, work together, do things together in the United States. The Indian subcontinent would have a limitless potential for the 21st century if the differences between the two nations could be reconciled. There would be less need to spend vast amounts of money on military expenditures and more funds available for education, for social development, for all kinds of challenges that are out there facing people. So I look forward to making a real stab at that next year, and I see some hopeful signs there. But many of you can help, and we need your help.

The last thing I want to say is that in this coming election season, which is already well underway, I think it's very important that we not forget that we all still have to do the people's business. We all get paid; we're expected to show up for work every day. And I expect to accomplish a great deal next year, with the help of Senator Johnson and Senator Moynihan. And I am comforted by the thought that when term limits take me away, he'll still be here, thanks to you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at the Westin Fairfax Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Johnson's wife, Barbara, and former Representatives Vic Fazio and Jim Slattery.

Remarks at a "Keep Hope Alive" Reception

December 7, 1999

The President. Thank you so much. Mark, thank you for this evening. Reverend Meeks, Dennis, all the distinguished business and labor leaders in the audience, and my many friends—Berry, Willie, so many others.

Thank you, Smokey, for being here and for singing for Stevie at the Kennedy Center Honors the other night. You were magnificent. Thank you so much.

Reverend, thanks for bringing your whole family here, except for those who had to have babies and read books tonight. [Laughter] Santita thanks for the music; it was magnificent, as always. And Jackie, thank you for being my friend and my inspiration.

And I want to thank your mother for all the things that Jesse said. But I want you to know, I've been in public life, now—well, I started running for—I ran for my first office almost 26 years ago. I have talked to tens of thousands of people. I've shaken hundreds of thousands, maybe over a million hands now. And Grandma, you're the only person, ever, who came up and complimented me on quoting Machiavelli in a speech, in my whole life, ever. [Laughter] She said, "Every smart politician reads that fellow." [Laughter]

And that brings me to Jesse, because the quote from Machiavelli that she likes so well—now a quote that's well over 500 years old—said, "There is nothing so difficult in all of human affairs than to change the established order of things. For those who will benefit are uncertain of their gain, but those who will lose are absolutely certain of their loss." [Laughter]

Now, I'm honored to be here with Minyon Moore, my political director; Gene Sperling, my National Economic Adviser, just walked in; he works with Reverend Jackson—because Jesse Jackson has been my friend for many years, long before either one of us could have known we'd be standing on this stage together and because he has done that most difficult thing in all of human affairs. He has changed the established order of things. And America is a better place.

I think about what he did to help save the Community Reinvestment Act and what he's done to help me enforce it. We now have over 95 percent of all the money ever loaned under that law has been loaned since I've been President, thanks in no small measure to him and to you. I think about all the wonderful things he's done as my Special Envoy to Africa, most recently in Sierra Leone, but in so many other places. I think about all those years with the civil rights movement, with Rainbow/PUSH, all the voter education drives, all the long campaigns, always sticking

up for issues bigger than himself and for people in difficult situations.

I was thinking tonight when Jesse was talking about a night many, many years ago when he gave a speech in Little Rock, and I brought him back home to the Governor's Mansion, and we got Hillary to come down to the kitchen, and we sat in the kitchen, and we cleaned out the refrigerator. [*Laughter*] We just kept on talking and kept on eating, and we kept on talking and kept on eating, until finally Hillary reminded me that I had to go to work in the morning and kicked him out of the house. [*Laughter*]

I was thinking something else, too. In the gripping story of Jesse's past—you've got to make allowances for us, you know; I think people from the South generally tend to be more obsessed with the past than other people, in ways that are beautiful and burdensome and maybe boring to other people. But we are. But tonight I want to ask you to just take onboard everything Jesse said. And I want to ask you this question: So what now?

If you think about it, almost every major, big thing we have ever done in this country, we have done in the throes of difficulty or threat. This great country of ours was born out of the pangs of war, by people who were smart enough to say all of us are created equal, and then to say, but, oh, these slaves count as 60 percent of a person, for purposes of the census. And then to say we're all created equal, but you can't vote unless you're A, white, B, male, and C, you have to own property, which means that if I'd been around back then, I probably couldn't have voted either—[*laughter*]—because I'd have been one of the hired hands.

So, then, we were born in the pangs of a great war. And Mr. Lincoln comes along, and we finally got rid of slavery after the bloodiest war in all of our history. When we were a much, much smaller country we lost more people in the Civil War than any other one, just over the proposition that we were going to hang together and free people. It happened out of war.

And then in the industrial revolution we had some real social progress in the absence of war, but people were really suffering. I mean, little children, 10 years old, were working in factories 70 hours a week. Women

with little children were working on Saturdays and way up into the night. And there was abject human suffering. And then the Depression came, and we had our first real comprehensive wave of social legislation. And we overcame the war, as Jesse said, and got out of the Depression.

And then we had the great civil rights movement of the sixties because of Martin Luther King and all the others, because the Supreme Court was visionary and brave, and—let's be honest—because the Congress and the country were conscience-stricken after President Kennedy was murdered.

Now, in my lifetime and maybe in the lifetime of this country, we have never had so much economic prosperity so broadly shared with the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the lowest poverty rate in 20 years and the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded and the highest rate of business and homeownership among minorities, as well as the majority population, ever recorded; the lowest female unemployment in 40 years, so broadly shared, with the absence of either an internal threat or an external threat to our security. Crime rate is the lowest in 30 years; teen pregnancy rate is the lowest in 30 years; welfare rolls are the lowest in 30 years.

So what I want to ask you is, what now? And I want to ask you, even if you're not from the South, not to lose your memory. [*Laughter*]

Because I came here tonight not only because I owe Jesse and because I love him and because Mark told me I had to—[*laughter*]—and because I want Dennis and Bill to help Hillary. [*Laughter*] I also came here because—I'm not running for anything—[*laughter*]—I want to spend the rest of my life as a good citizen.

But I'm telling you, in my lifetime—in my lifetime—this country has never had—not one time—the same level of economic prosperity, social progress, and national self-confidence, in the absence of domestic crisis or international threat. Never, not once. And my lifetime, unfortunately, is getting longer. I was talking to a 6-year-old girl over Thanksgiving. She looked up at me, and she said, "How old are you?" And I said, "I'm 53." She said, "Oh, that's a lot." [*Laughter*]

So what are we going to do about it? So what? That's what I want you to think about, because we've done real well when we were under the gun in this country, you know? We had Abraham Lincoln, and people fought and bled and died; finally we got rid of slavery. We had Franklin Roosevelt, unemployment was 25 percent, got ourselves in a war; we whipped the Depression and won the war. We had Martin Luther King and people in the streets, and it took a few riots—and like I said, President Kennedy got killed—but we had President Johnson's great record in civil rights, which many of you contributed to.

What are we going to do with this? Because what I want to say to you is—the great English writer, Samuel Johnson, said that the prospect of a person's own destruction wonderfully concentrates the mind. The flip side is true: when you think things are peachy-keen and can't get bad, it distracts the mind. It makes people shortsighted. It makes people selfish. It makes people distracted.

And what I want to say is, we've still got some huge challenges out there. And we have the opportunity that no generation of Americans has ever had: to take our kids out of poverty; to give them all health care; to bring genuine economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind; to bring genuine educational opportunities to all of our kids; and to build one America, without regard to race or region or income or sexual orientation. We've got this chance, and we'd better not blow it.

If we don't shoulder our responsibility to deal with this, our children and our grandchildren will never forgive us, because the country has never had this chance before, and believe me, nothing lasts forever. That kind of keeps you going in the tough times, but it's well to remember in the good times.

So I say to you, that's the main reason I'm here. Yes, Jesse started this Wall Street Project because he wanted to create more empowerment for individuals who were talented and just left behind. But we also know that there are whole peoples and places—the Indian reservations, Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, big neighborhoods in our cities—who haven't felt this economic prosperity. If we can't get it to them now, we

will never get around to it. If we can't bring the benefits of free enterprise to the people and places that don't have it now—with the lowest unemployment in 30 years and the highest growth rate—we will never get around to it. If we can't save Social Security and take it way out beyond the baby boom generation and do something about elderly women who are too poor compared to the other retirees, elderly women living alone—if we don't do that now, when are we going to get around to it? If we don't extend the life of Medicare and provide some prescription drug coverage to the three-quarters of our seniors that can't afford what they need, when will we ever get around to it? If we're not going to give all of our kids—since we now know how to turn around failing schools; we don't have any excuse anymore; it's not a matter of some sort of scientific project—if we're not going to bridge the digital divide and make sure all of our kids have access to the Internet world of tomorrow—if we're not going to do it now, when will we get around to it? If we're not going to shoulder our responsibilities to our friends and neighbors, from the Caribbean to Africa to the world's most indebted countries, so that they, too, can be our partners and be a part of tomorrow, when are we ever going to get around to it?

Now, you can have your own list. But I'm telling you, one of the things I think we've proved is that you can take good social policy and good economic policy and prove they go hand-in-hand. The progressives—we lost a lot of elections because people said, "Well, those people have a good heart but a soft head. And if you put them in they'll spend us in the ditch, and tax us until we bleed. And they won't be able to run the economy."

They can't say that anymore. We have the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years. And we cut taxes on millions of working people with the earned-income tax credit. We raised the minimum wage, and we ought to raise it again. And we passed the Family and Medical Leave Act, and we ought to make it broader. We ought to do things to prove that good social policy and good economic policy go hand-in-hand, good environmental policy and good social policy and good economic policy go hand-in-hand.

You know, if you go into city after city after city, you will see, as my good friend Congressman John Lewis says, that environmental justice can be a civil rights issue. How many people do you know in urban areas living by toxic waste dumps that we could turn into economic goldmines if we cleaned them up? That's what we're trying to do.

But you make your own list when you go home tonight. Just write down the five things that you think are the biggest challenges facing America. And then you ask yourself, if we can't do it now, when will we ever get around to doing it?

When I think of Rainbow/PUSH, I think of two things: Rainbow means we're all in it together, and we all have a place at the table; PUSH is what Jesse does to me when he thinks I'm not doing right. [*Laughter*] And both those things are good. And you know, 14 or 15 months from now, when I become a citizen again, then I can be a pusher. We'll all do that.

But this is a great country. You remember the history of it. Remember the stories Jesse told. Think about his mother-in-law. I got my pin. [*Laughter*] Think about his mother-in-law.

But you think about this whole deal, and I'm telling you—I defy you to cite a time in your lifetime which has been like this. And I say it not to be self-serving. Look, I'm grateful I got to serve. I'm grateful that I got to serve at a time when the challenges of the country fit my experience, and what I knew, and what I felt in my heart.

But it's like turning a big old oceanliner around in the middle of the Pacific. You can't do it overnight. So we've turned this country around. We're going full steam ahead in the right direction.

But I am telling you, it's no different from a person, a family, or a business. A nation, when things are going well, has to make a decision. And we have a responsibility to reach out for all those who have been left behind, to create one America, and to build the future of our dreams for our children. If not now, we will never get around to it.

So you go home tonight, and make your list, and keep supporting Rainbow/PUSH, and demand that your leaders take this his-

toric opportunity to be worthy of the sacrifices that Jesse talked about tonight.

Thank you, and God bless you.

Wait, wait now. Before you all leave, we're going to do one more thing. Jesse and I, we've got a little friend here that I want to sing for us. We're going to have one more song.

Come on, Joshua. Come up here. Come on, Josh.

[*At this point, child singer Joshua Watts sang a song, and musician Smokey Robinson urged the audience to keep the arts in the school system.*]

The President. I know we've all got to go. I just want to say amen to this. [*Laughter*] We had a VH1 concert at the White House the other night because John Sykes, the head of VH1, is collecting instruments—he's collected, I think, almost one million now, around America—to give to schools so they could have music programs. But all over the country, these music programs, these art programs, have been cancelled out.

And we know that there are poor children out there who will learn better and find ways to express themselves better, stay out of trouble and stay in love with education if they have access to these things. This is a huge deal, and I want to thank you for saying that. It's a big deal.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:30 p.m. in the Washington Room at the Hotel Washington. In his remarks, the President referred to Reverend Jesse Jackson, president and founder, Mark Allen, deputy field director and assistant to Rev. Jackson, Dennis Rivera, cochair, and Rev. James Meeks, board member, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition; Berry Gordy, Jr., founder, Motown Records; musician Stevie Wonder; Willie Gray, attorney, Gary, Williams, Parenti, Finney, Lewis, McManus, Watson, and Sperando law firm; former Deputy Mayor Bill Lynch of New York; and Reverend Jackson's wife Jacqueline, daughter Santita, and mother-in-law Gertrude Brown.

The President's News Conference

December 8, 1999

The President. Good afternoon. Before I take your questions I have a statement to

make. We are at a pivotal moment in the Middle East peace process, one that can shape the face of the region for generations to come. As I have said on numerous occasions, history will not forgive a failure to seize this opportunity to achieve a comprehensive peace.

We've made good progress on the Palestinian track, and I'm determined to help Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat move forward in accordance with their very ambitious timetable.

We've also been working intensely, for months, for a resumption of negotiations between Israel and Syria. Today I am pleased to announce that Prime Minister Barak and President Asad have agreed that the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations will be resumed from the point where they left off. The talks will be launched here in Washington next week with Prime Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Shara.

After an initial round for 1 or 2 days, they will return to the region, and intensive negotiations will resume at a site to be determined soon thereafter. These negotiations will be high level, comprehensive, and conducted with the aim of reaching an agreement as soon as possible.

Israelis and Syrians still need to make courageous decisions in order to reach a just and lasting peace. But today's step is a significant breakthrough, for it will allow them to deal with each other face to face, and that is the only way to get there.

I want to thank Prime Minister Barak and President Asad for their willingness to take this important step. And I want to thank Secretary Albright who has worked very hard on this and, as you know, has been in the region and meeting with the leaders as we have come to this conclusion.

Before us is a task as clear as it is challenging. As I told Prime Minister Barak and President Asad in phone conversations with them earlier today, they now bear a heavy responsibility of bringing peace to the Israeli and Syrian people.

On the Palestinian track, Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat are committed to a rapid timetable: a framework agreement by mid-February, a permanent status agreement by mid-September. I'm convinced it is

possible to achieve that goal, to put an end to generations of conflict, to realize the aspirations of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people. And I will do everything I can to help them in that historic endeavor.

It is my hope that with the resumption of Israeli-Syrian talks, negotiations between Israel and Lebanon also will soon begin.

There can be no illusion here. On all tracks, the road ahead will be arduous; the task of negotiating agreements will be difficult. Success is not inevitable. Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese will have to confront fateful questions. They face hard choices. They will have to stand firmly against all those who seek to derail the peace, and sadly, there are still too many of them.

But let there also be no misunderstanding. We have a truly historic opportunity now. With a comprehensive peace, Israel will live in a safe, secure, and recognized border for the first time in its history. The Palestinian people will be able to forge their own destiny on their own land. Syrians and Lebanese will fulfill their aspirations and enjoy the full fruits of peace. And throughout the region, people will be able to build more peaceful and, clearly, more prosperous lives.

As I have said, and I say one more time, I will spare neither time nor effort in pursuit of that goal. Today the parties have given us clear indication that they, too, are willing to take that path. Peace has long been within our sight. Today it is within our grasp, and we must seize it.

Thank you very much.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Eliau Gonzalez

Q. Mr. President, on another matter involving a foreign government, as a father, do you sympathize with the demand of Eliau Gonzalez for the return of his 6-year-old son to Cuba, now that the boy's mother and stepfather were drowned in a boating accident on the way to Florida?

The President. Well, I think, of course, all fathers would be sympathetic. The question is, and I think the most important thing is, what would be best for the child? And there is a legal process for determining that.

I personally don't think that any of us should have any concern other than that, that

the law be followed. I don't think that politics or threats should have anything to do with it, and if I have my way, it won't. We should let the people who are responsible for this, who have a legal responsibility, try to do the right thing by the child.

These decisions are often difficult, even in domestic situations, but I hope that is what would be done, and it should be done without regard to politics.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, did both sides make a lot of concessions to get to this breakthrough point? And also, are you aware that Amnesty International says that Israel is continuing the demolition of Palestinian homes in east Jerusalem and on the West Bank, and also, the expansion of the settlements? Are all these part of a package?

The President. Well, Prime Minister Barak made a very important statement about settlements yesterday, which I think was quite welcome. And it's a good first step. As you know, we believe that nothing should be done which makes it more difficult to make peace or which prejudices the final outcome. But I do think that the statement yesterday is a step in the right direction.

As to your question about Syria, I think it's very important at this point that we maximize the chances for success, which means it would not be useful for me to get into the details. But the negotiations are resuming on the basis of all previous negotiations between the United States and Syria—I mean, between Syria and Israel, and with the United States.

I think it is clear that both parties have sufficient confidence that their needs can be met through negotiations, or they would not have reached this agreement today.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Russia and the Situation in Chechnya

Q. On Chechnya, you used sanctions to punish Yugoslavia and Indonesia for repression; why aren't sanctions being considered against Russia?

The President. Well, there are two categories of aid here in question—or, at least—

let's talk about the aid. A sanctions regime has to be imposed by the United Nations, and Russia has a veto there. But I'm not sure that would be in our interest or in the interest of the ultimate resolution of the crisis.

Let me just say, with regard to the aid, because I've been asked about that, I think it's important to point out to the American people that two-thirds of the aid that we spend in Russia is involved in denuclearization and safeguarding nuclear materials. And I think it is plain that we have an interest in continuing that.

The other third goes to fund democracy, the things that we Americans believe would lead to better decisions. It goes to an independent media; it goes to student exchanges; it goes to NGO's, helping people set up small businesses. I don't think our interests would be furthered by terminating that. And as of now, there is no pending IMF transfer because of the general opinion by the IMF that not all the economic conditions have been met. So that's a bridge we'll have to cross when we get there.

Yes.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, when Israel and Syria do sit down, they obviously are going to have to confront the issue of the Golan Heights almost immediately. How are they going to resolve that? What will the U.S. role be? Will you see the administration—Secretary Albright, yourself possibly—being a mediator? And finally, why isn't President Asad sitting down with Prime Minister Barak at this point?

The President. I think they're sitting down because they want to make peace, and they have now concluded that they can do it on terms and that will meet both their interests. You've asked good questions, but any answer I give would make it unlikely that they would be successfully resolved. Frankly, we all took a blood oath that we wouldn't talk beyond our points today, and I'm going to keep my word.

Q. Sir, maybe you misunderstood. I was asking why President Asad is not personally involved in the talks at this point.

The President. Oh, he is very personally involved. I think that—I believe that he felt

it was better—and maybe you should ask the Syrians this—but let me just say, he is very personally involved in this. I think he thinks it better, for whatever reason, he's made the decision that Foreign Minister Shara, who, thankfully, has recovered from his recent stroke and is perfectly able to come here, to do so. And I'm quite comfortable that this is as close to a person-to-person talk that they could have without doing it.

Yes, go ahead.

Elían Gonzalez/Situation in Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, can I follow up about Cuba and Chechnya? With regard to Cuba, you said that politics ought to stay out of this decision regarding the boy. Are you saying, sir, that you can envision a circumstance where, in your mind, it would be appropriate to return this young boy to Communist Cuba?

Second question, regarding Chechnya: Given the fact that two-thirds of the aid goes to denuclearization, a third to democracy effects, do you envision no circumstances, sir, under which the United States would cut off that aid? And how does that square with your statement that Russia will pay a heavy price for its war against Chechnya?

The President. Okay, the first question first. I do not know enough about the facts, so you can draw no inferences to what I might or might not do because it's not a decision for me to make. There is a law here. There are people charged with making the decisions. I think they ought to do their best within the parameters of the law; do what seems to be best for the child.

That is all I have to say, and you shouldn't read anything into it. I don't know enough about the case, and I don't think that any of us should interfere with what is going to be a difficult enough decision as it is.

Now on Russia, I have stated what my present view is, and that is all I have done. I think Russia is already paying a heavy price. I think they'll pay a heavy price in two ways. First of all, I don't think the strategy will work. As I said, I have no sympathy for the Chechen rebels; I have no sympathy for the invasion of Dagestan; and I have no sympathy for terrorist acts in Moscow; and none of us should have. But the people of Chechnya

should not be punished for what the rebels did. They don't represent the established government of Chechnya. They don't represent a majority of the people there. And the strategy, it seems to me, is more likely to hurt ordinary citizens than the legitimate targets of the wrath of the Russian Government.

So I think that—first of all, I think the policy will not work, and therefore, it will be very costly, just like it was before when it didn't work. Secondly, the continuation of it and that amassing of hundreds of thousands of refugees, which will have to be cared for by the international community—we've already set aside, I think, at least \$10 million to try to make our contributions for it—will further alienate the global community from Russia. And that's a bad thing, because they need support not just from the IMF and the World Bank, they need investors. They need people to have confidence in what they're doing.

They're about to have elections. And so there will be a heavy price there. And I don't think there's any question about that.

I think it's already—yes, go ahead.

Elían Gonzalez

Q. Sir, regarding the Cuban boy, you say you don't know enough about the facts. A lot of people in South Africa think the facts are pretty simple. They say that even though the boy's father's in Cuba, this boy would be better off growing up in the United States than in Cuba under Castro. What would you say to those people?

The President. Well, I think the decision-makers will take into account all the relevant facts. But I don't think I should make the decision. First of all, I can't make the decision under the law. And I don't think I should tell them how to make the decision because I don't know enough about the facts. I believe they will do their best to make the right decision.

Q. What about growing up in Cuba as opposed to growing up in the United States?

The President. Well, of course, I'd rather grow up in the United States. But there may be other considerations there, and one was asked in the previous question about it. So we'll just have to evaluate it.

You know, there are times in the United States when judges have to make decisions—the legal standard governing domestic cases is the best interest of the child—there's a slightly different characterization, I think, of what will determine the international decision here. This is, you know, an unusual case for us. But even here, sometimes it's very hard to say. You know, will children be better off with their parents in America? Almost always, but not always.

So you just can't—I don't think—I can't serve any useful purpose by commenting on it, because I don't know enough about the facts of the family life or even the governing law on this. I just know that I think we ought to let the people make the decision, urge them to do their best to do what's best for the child, and try to take as much political steam out of it as possible so that the little child can be considered.

Yes.

Federal Action Against Gun Manufacturers

Q. Sir, on another legal matter, your threat of a class-action against gun manufacturers, is this an attempt, sir, through either coercion or, ultimately, the judicial branch, to get accomplished what you couldn't get accomplished through legislation? And with the difficulties that you've had recently getting some of your initiatives passed in Congress, as you head into this last year of your Presidency, is this the hint of a new tactic to get those initiatives passed, when you can't get them through Congress?

The President. Let's talk about the gun suit first, and then I'll respond to the general question. The litigation, which is being initiated by public housing authorities, has a good grounding in fact. There are 10,000 gun crimes every year in the largest public housing authorities. Now, they spend a billion dollars on security. And I think it's important that the American people know they're not asking for money from the gun manufacturers; they are seeking a remedy to try to help solve the problem.

They want, first of all, more care from the manufacturers and the dealers with whom they deal. Senator Schumer released a study, you may remember, that said that one per-

cent of the gun dealers sell 50 percent of the guns involved in gun crimes. Now, if that study is accurate—and he believes it is—that is a stunning fact. And there ought to be something done about that. And if there is a way that the court could craft a resolution of that, that would be a good thing, I think. The second thing we want to do is to stop irresponsible marketing practices. You all remember that one company advertised an assault weapon by saying that it was hard to get fingerprints from. You know, you don't have to be all broke out with brilliance to figure out what the message is there. And the third thing they want is some safety design changes.

Now, let me hasten to say that we have a lot of gun manufacturers in this country who have been, I think, immensely responsible. You'll remember the majority of the gun manufacturers signed on to our proposal for child trigger locks. I still would like legislation to cover them all. But this should not be viewed—if you look at the nature of the release, they're not trying to bankrupt any companies; they're trying to make their living spaces safer. And I think it's a legitimate thing.

Now to your general question, I think if you go back over the whole reach of our tenure here, I have always tried to use the executive authority in areas where I thought it was important. We're doing it on medical privacy. We're doing it on—yesterday we had the press conference on prevention of medical errors. We're doing it with the paid family leave initiative we offered to the States. We did it when we set aside the roadless areas in the forests. So I think this is an appropriate thing to do.

But I would also remind you at the end of this legislative session from the Congress, we got 100,000 teachers, 50,000 police, 60,000 housing vouchers to help people move from welfare to work. We passed the Kennedy-Jeffords bill to allow people with disabilities to move into the workplace and keep their medical care from the Government. We passed the Financial Modernization Act, which will dramatically, I think, improve financial services, grow the economy. And we've protected the Community Reinvestment Act. We doubled funds for after-

school programs. We provided, for the very first time ever, funds to help school districts turn around failing schools or shut them down.

So I'm continuing to work with Congress, and I will do so vigorously. But I think this was an appropriate thing to do on the merits. Yes.

Seattle Round

Q. Mr. President, some of your critics have suggested that the reason that you pressed the issues of the environment and labor at the WTO meeting in Seattle is to benefit the Presidential candidacy of Vice President Gore, knowing that there might be a backlash from the developing nations. How do you respond to that?

The President. That's wrong. And I would like to make two comments, one on the WTO ministerial meeting and, secondly, on that general issue.

The Uruguay Round was launched in 1986. The trade ministers started trying to launch it in 1982. It took them 4 years to get it off the ground. The fundamental reason a new round was not launched here had, in my judgment, very little to do with my philosophy of trade, which I'll talk about in a moment. There were—the big blocks here were the Europeans and the Japanese, on the one hand—the United States and the developing nations, we all had positions that couldn't be reconciled. The Europeans were not prepared at this time to change their common agricultural policy, which accounts for 85 percent of the export subsidies in the world. The Japanese had their own agricultural and other issues to deal with.

The United States was not prepared to change its policy on dumping, because—and I think the recent Asian financial crisis justifies that, I might add. Even though we did finally move under our dumping laws, and we had to move, to try to keep our steel industry, which took down 60 percent of its employment and modernized during the eighties and the early nineties, we still bought 10 times as much steel during that crisis as the Europeans did. The recent WTO agreement we made with China protects us from surges and unfair dumping. We have the largest trade deficit in the world. Now, we

get a lot of good out of it: We get low inflation; we get goods from all over the world. But there has to be some sense of fairness and balance here.

And the developing nations, for their part, felt that they had not yet gotten enough benefits from the last trade round and the entry into the WTO. They think that we and everybody else—the Europeans, the Japanese, everybody—they think we ought to have more open markets for agricultural products, which doesn't affect America so much, and for textiles, which does affect us. That's the big issue being negotiated still with the Caribbean Basin and the Africa trade initiative.

So it's very important that you understand that there were real differences that we thought we could bridge, unrelated to labor and the environment, which we couldn't and which I think would have been clearer but for the backdrop of the demonstrations in Seattle over these other issues.

Now, to your second question. When I ran for President in 1992 and the big issue being debated was NAFTA, I said that I wanted to be for NAFTA, I would fight hard for it, but I felt strongly there ought to be provisions on labor and the environment in the agreement, and those provisions were included. I have always had what I guess you would call a Third Way position on trade. I think the position of Americans, including some in my party, that trade is bad for America and bad for the world is just dead wrong.

I think that the world is more prosperous, and I know America is more prosperous because of the continuing integration of the world's economy and the mutual interdependence of people and people being able to produce what they produce best in a competitive environment, including costs. And I think we benefit, not just from our exports but from the imports. That's what I believe. I believe we will have both a more prosperous and a more peaceful world if we have more of the right kind of globalization.

I read—one of the many, many articles that's been written in the last several days in the aftermath of Seattle pointed out that many of the world's most troubled places, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, to some extent the Middle East, suffer because they

have too little economic interconnection with the rest of the world.

I believe, even though I'm proud of the role that we've played and especially proud of the role George Mitchell played in the Irish peace settlement, I think it is unlikely that we would have done that if, also, Ireland didn't have the fastest growing economy in Europe and Northern Ireland weren't growing and people didn't imagine that they could have a totally different life if they just let go of what they've been fighting over.

So the people who don't believe that trade is good, I just think they're wrong. Now having said that, I think that as the world grows more interdependent, it is unrealistic to think that there will be an international economic policy with rules unrelated to an emerging international consensus on the environment and an international consensus on labor. That does not mean that I would cut off our markets to India and Pakistan, for example, if they didn't raise their wages to American levels. I know that's what the sort of stated fear was. I never said that, I don't believe that.

But I think that—let me give you an analogy. Several years ago, the Europeans did this, and I applaud them: They were actually the impetus for protecting intellectual property more than the United States was. And people debated that for years. Why, intellectual property has no place in trade bills. Who cares if people are pirating books and selling them for 60 cents apiece when they cost \$20 somewhere else? And now, we just take it as a given. And it's a good thing for the United States.

You think about all the software we're exporting, all the CD's we're exporting, all the things—intellectual property is a big deal to us now. It was just as alien a subject a few years ago to trade talks as questions of labor and the environment are today.

So I think I've got a good position here. It has nothing to do with this campaign. It's a position I've had for years. And I believe the world will slowly come to it. We do have to be sensitive to the developing countries. We cannot say that, you know, you're out of here because you can't have the same labor environment we do. But we also have to—all we ask for was to start a dialog within the WTO on trade issues. On the environ-

ment, all we ask is, is that the decisionmaking process not degrade the environment when countries have environmental policies and interests, and just blithely override them because there's an immediate, short-term economic benefit.

I think that's right. And I believe that 10 years from now, somebody will be sitting here, and we'll all take it for granted that we've come a long way in integrating trade and the environment—I mean, trade and labor. That's what I think, and that's what I believe.

Man of the Century

Q. Mr. President, I'm afraid this is in the pop-quiz category of questions, but I'll try to make it easy for you. Every year, this time of year, we pick a Man of the Year. Maybe one day it will be Person of the Year. I'd like to know what your pick of the Man of the Century would be—and note that I'm not asking you for the millennium. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, if it were for the millennium, it might be someone different. Well, this century produced a lot of great men and women. But as an American, I would have to choose Franklin Roosevelt, because in this century our greatest peril was in the Depression and World War II and because he led us not only through those things and laid the building blocks for a better society with things like Social Security and unemployment insurance, which was, interestingly enough, first recommended by his cousin Theodore Roosevelt when he was President, but he also looked to the future, endorsing the United Nations and a lot of the other international institutions which were subsequently created under President Truman.

Finally, I think Roosevelt was an example to Americans of the importance of not giving up and of the dignity inherent in every person. And when Franklin Roosevelt was first elected, Oliver Wendell Holmes was still in the Supreme Court; he was 92 years old. And President Roosevelt was taken to see Oliver Wendell Holmes who was still reading Plato in his nineties and all that. Holmes was a pretty acerbic fellow when he said, after meeting Roosevelt, that he thought he might

not have had a first-class mind, but he certainly had a first-class temperament.

And he did. He understood that reality is more than the facts before you; it's also how you feel about them, how you react to them, what your attitude is. That was the advice that—"only thing we have to fear was fear itself" was much more than just a slogan to him. He had lived it before he asked the American people to live it.

So for all those reasons, if I had to pick one person, I would pick him.

Yes, sir.

Colombia and Venezuela

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you two questions on two very important South American countries that are vital to U.S. foreign policy, Colombia and Venezuela.

First of all, on Colombia, sir. President Pastrana has been extraditing people, and they're still waiting for the help that he is expecting from the United States. Will you fight, will you go to the mat for this, starting in the year 2000, for President Pastrana? That's the first question.

The second question—

The President. You're all asking two questions. That's pretty impressive. [Laughter]

Q. We're just following the others.

You met President-elect Chavez when he first came to Washington, and then you met him as President in New York. He will be—Venezuela will be holding a very unique plebiscite a week from today, which has polarized the country. Some people that back President Chavez thinks it's great; others think it will cause damage to democracy. I'd like your opinion on both subjects, sir.

The President. My opinion on the second question is that I'm not a citizen of Venezuela, and I think that they ought to make their own decisions. But I'm glad that they're getting to vote on it.

My opinion on the first question is, I should point out—remember now, Colombia is already the third biggest recipient of American aid. But I do think we should do more. And President Pastrana has, number one, extradited drug criminals to this country, which is important; number two, is facing a terribly difficult situation where he has both a long-standing civil insurgency in Colombia and all

the problems of the drug cartels and the possible interrelation of the two. It's a terrible situation.

Colombia is a very large country. They've been our ally for a long time. They had a long period of steady economic growth. They have suffered terribly in the last couple of years. And I think we should do more.

I had a talk with Speaker Hastert about it, who is also, by the way, very interested in this, when we were together in Chicago recently. And I hope that early next year, we will have a proposal to provide further assistance to Colombia that will be substantial, effective, and have broad bipartisan support. That is my goal.

Ken [Ken Walsh, U.S. News & World Report].

Vice President Al Gore

Q. Vice President Gore has made a point of saying that his candidacy for President now will take precedence over his duties and activities as Vice President. I wonder, how has his role diminished in your administration, and how much has he missed? And does a diminished role by a Vice President in your administration hamper what you're trying to do in any way?

The President. Well, obviously, he's not around as much. We don't have lunch every week, and I miss that terribly. But he was there all day today. He had the meeting with President Kuchma. He knows that the future of Ukraine is very important to our interests and to what we're trying to accomplish in that part of the world. And he came to our meeting this morning, and then, after our meeting was over, he ran a whole series of meetings for several hours after that. So in his critical functions, he's still performing them.

And I would say, first of all, I strongly support what he's doing. I think he has the right to run. I'm glad he's running, and you know I think he'd be a great President. But he—even having said that, whenever there's an important decision in an area that he's been very active in, I always call him; we still talk about it. And his role is probably still larger than that of any previous Vice President, even though he's out campaigning. But it's

just less than it used to be, because he's not here all the time.

But I have no criticism of it. I think he's doing what he ought to be doing, and I think it's in the best interests of the country for him to do it.

Mara [Mara Liasson, National Public Radio].

Accomplishments and Disappointments of 1999

Q. You're ending a tumultuous year that began with impeachment and closed with tear gas in Seattle. Could you tell us what you're proudest of this year, and what events or accomplishments of yours that you're the least proud of?

The President. Well, I'm very happy—what I'm proudest of is that it turned out to be a very productive year. If you look at—I'll just mention them again. I did before, but we wound up—after a year in which almost nothing was accomplished in the Congress, we wound up with a recommitment to the 100,000 teachers, to the 50,000 police. We passed the financial modernization bill. We passed an historic 60,000 housing vouchers to new people from welfare to work. We passed the bill to give disabled people the right to take health care into the workplace. We doubled after-school funding. We passed this fund that I've been pushing hard for, for a long time, to help the States turn around or shut down failing schools. We had quite a lot of accomplishments.

On the foreign front, we had the China-WTO agreement; progress with the Middle East peace; the Northern Ireland peace agreement; Kosovo, which I am very, very proud of. I still believe our country did the right thing there. And we've got talks starting on Cyprus now. We've got a Caspian pipeline agreement, which I believe 30 years from now you'll all look back on that as one of the most important things that happened this year. We had the Conventional Forces in Europe agreement with Russia, which will result in the removal of their forces from Georgia and Moldova. We had the debt relief for the poorest countries in the world, something I'm immensely proud of and deeply committed to. We made a big dent in our U.N. arrears issue. And we have worked with

North Korea to end their missile program. So I'm very proud of what happened this year.

What I'm most disappointed in is what still got left on the table. I'm terribly disappointed that we still haven't passed a Patients' Bill of Rights, that we still haven't raised the minimum wage, that we still haven't passed hate crimes legislation, that we still didn't pass that commonsense gun legislation, which was crying out for action after what happened at Columbine—and we had another school incident this week. I am disappointed that we didn't pass the school construction bill. I'm hoping we will pass the new markets initiative next year. If we don't do something now to bring economic opportunity to the areas of this country which have been left behind, we will never forgive ourselves. And I'm profoundly disappointed that we still haven't done anything to take the life of Social Security out beyond the baby boom generation and extend the life of Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit.

So my only disappointments are what we didn't get done. But I'm gratified by what was accomplished.

Q. Do you blame yourself for that, that you didn't put forward a plan on Social Security, to make it more substantive? Is there something you're—[inaudible]—

The President. No, I gave them—first of all, I asked them—there's no point in putting forward—look, I tried it the other way with health care. I put forward a plan. And everybody said, you put forward—I remember Senator Dole saying, "You put forward your plan, then I'll put forward my plan. We'll get together. We'll agree, and we'll pass a plan." And so, you know, I've had experience with that. That didn't work out too well.

So I had all these meetings on Social Security. You remember, I worked very hard on it, and I asked if we could get together and work out something. I still haven't given up on that, by the way. And I know the conventional wisdom is that these things are less likely to be done in election years, but in some ways they may be more likely.

And I did give them a plan which, if they had embraced it—which would simply require them not only to save the Social Security surplus but to take the interest savings

from paying down the debt, with the Social Security surplus, and if you just put that back into Social Security, you could take Social Security out beyond the life of the baby boom generation. And I offered to do more with them.

But in order to pass something like that, we've got to have a bipartisan process. And I will do whatever it takes to get that done. But I worked as hard as I could this year to keep working in a very open and collegial spirit with not only the Democrats, without whom I wouldn't have passed any of those things I just mentioned—and all of you know that; they hung in there at the end; we got those things done—but also with the Republicans, with whom I began to have, I think, some real progress there along toward the end of the legislative session. And I hope we will continue it.

Yes, go ahead.

Russia and the Situation in Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, on Chechnya, it seems as though the Russians don't feel they will pay a heavy price, and perhaps they don't care. I'm wondering if between now and Saturday's deadline you plan to try to directly contact President Yeltsin to once again convey your feelings on this matter.

The President. Well, I haven't decided what else I can do. I do think—first of all, they may believe that because of their position in the United Nations and because no one wants them to fail and have more problems than they've got, that they can do this. But most of life's greatest wounds for individuals and for countries are self-inflicted. They're not inflicted by other people.

And I will say again, the greatest problems that the Russians will have over Chechnya are—one is, I don't think the strategy will work. I have never said they weren't right to want to do something with the Chechen rebels. But I don't think the strategy will work, and therefore, it will be expensive, costly, and politically damaging, internally, to them.

Secondly, it will affect the attitude of the international community over a period of time in ways that are somewhat predictable and in some ways unpredictable, and that is a very heavy price to pay, because it works

better when everybody's pulling for Russia. It's a great country, and they have all these resources and talented, educated people, and they need to—and yet, they've got a declining life expectancy as well as all these economic problems. And I think it's a bad thing for this to be the number one issue both inside the country and in our relationships with them. So I do think it's going to be a very costly thing.

Yes.

Panama Canal/China and Taiwan

Q. Mr. President, with China building a second short-range missile base, allowing them to take Taiwan with little or no warning, are you concerned about America's ability to defend that island, especially with a Chinese company taking over the Panama Canal's ports at the end of this month?

The President. Well, let's talk about the Panama Canal, and then I'll come back to Taiwan. And to be fair, I think I may have misstated this earlier. It's important for the American people to understand that the canal, itself, will be operated and controlled entirely by the Government of Panama, through the Panama Canal Authority. That is the locks, ingress and egress, access, openness—the canal is completely and totally within the control of the Panamanians.

Now, the Hong Kong company which got the concession to operate the ports will be responsible for loading and unloading ships. They also do this in three or four ports in Great Britain. It's one of the biggest companies in the world that does this. The managing director is British. Most of the employees will be Panamanian. So I feel comfortable that our commercial and security interests can be protected under this arrangement. That's the first question.

Now, the second question is, China is modernizing its military in a lot of ways. But our policy on China is crystal clear: We believe there is one China. We think it has to be resolved through cross-strait dialog, and we oppose and would view with grave concern any kind of violent action. And that hasn't changed.

There has been a lot of buildup of tension on both sides that I think is unnecessary and counterproductive. If you look at the amount

of Taiwanese investment in China, for example—that goes back to my Irish example—if you look at the Taiwanese investment in China, it's obvious that eventually they're going to get this worked out because they're too interconnected by ties of family and, increasingly, by ties of the economy, and the politics of neither place should lead either side into doing something rash. And I hope that this will not happen. But our policy is clear and you know what I've done in the past. And I think that's all I should say about it right now.

Yes.

Hillary Clinton's Senatorial Campaign

Q. There is some confusion in people's minds about the First Lady's plans for the coming year. She has referred to the new house in New York as "my house" and indicated she plans to make that her primary residence. I'm wondering if you could tell us how much time you think the two of you will be apart in the coming year and how you feel about this arrangement?

The President. Well, first of all, I am happy for her, for the decision that she made. She was encouraged to run by many people, and she decided she wanted to do it. And if she's going to do it, she's got to spend a long time in New York. So she'll be there a lot. She'll be here when she can. I'll go up there when I can, and we'll be together as much as we can. We always make it a habit to talk at least once, if not more, every day. It's not the best arrangement in the world, but it's something that we can live with for a year. I love the house. We picked it out, and we like it, and I'm looking forward to living there when I leave here.

But I've got a job to do, and she now has a campaign to run, and so we'll have to be apart more than I wish we were. But it's not a big problem. She'll be here quite a lot, and I'll go up there when I can, and we'll manage it, and I think it will come out just fine. I'm very happy for her.

Wendell [Wendell Goler, Fox News Channel].

Responsibility for Impeachment

Q. Mr. President, just a couple of minutes ago you said that most of life's greatest

wounds are self-inflicted. If I can paraphrase a recent request by Ken Starr, sir, I wonder if now you can tell us how much of the pain you went through last year was self-inflicted and how much due to excesses by other people, political and Mr. Starr's excesses himself, sir?

The President. The mistake I made was self-inflicted, and the misconduct of others was not.

Yes.

Golden Parachutes

Q. Mr. President, in the case of—on the subject of corporate golden and platinum parachutes, particularly in the case of mergers and change of controlled packages, tens of millions, and more in most cases, are awarded to corporate officers. Directors just rubberstamp most of these sales to the detriment of other stockholders.

The President. What's the question?

Q. I'd like to know, what can and will the administration do to put a ceiling on this acrimonious alimony?

The President. Well, first of all, unless it's an abuse of the stockholders—and if it is, then we have Federal agencies which have jurisdiction over it—there's nothing we can do. We have made some changes in the tax laws—we did back in '93—that I thought were appropriate. But I don't think beyond that there's anything else we can do.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks], and then John [John M. Broder, New York Times]. Go ahead. No, April—I'll call on all of you, but April first.

Q. Okay.

The President. April first. [Laughter] That's the way I feel up here sometimes. [Laughter]

Q. It should be that way, though. [Laughter]

Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Differences

Mr. President, America is ending the century with resurfacing scars of racism. And where does the issue of race, in terms of your agenda for 2000, stand? And are you still prepared to release your book on race by the end of your term? And what do you think about the comments that there's internal fighting over this book in the White House?

The President. There really isn't much. I have a draft now, and I'm working on it. And I do plan to release it. And it will stay at the center of my concerns not only now but after I leave the White House.

I think that after the cold war and with the sort of end of the ideological battles, you've seen, I think that the biggest problem the world faces today is the conflict people have over their racial and ethnic and their related religious differences. And I plan to be heavily involved in it at home and around the world for the rest of my life.

Q. When do you think the book will come out, though?

The President. I don't know. I've got a day job, you know, and I'm not going to—I've got a library full of books on race, and almost all of them are quite good. But I don't want to put it out unless I think it could make a difference, even if it just says what other people have said, somehow it can make a difference. And I'm trying to make sure how it ought to be done. I don't want to just put it out because I said I would put it out; I want to make sure when I do it, it at least achieves the objectives I'm trying to achieve.

John.

Health Care Coverage

Q. Mr. President, the number of Americans who are not covered by health insurance has increased since you took office by about 7 million. Do you agree with Vice President Gore that Senator Bradley's plan for covering most of those people is irresponsible and unaffordable, even though we're enjoying the healthiest economy in decades?

The President. First of all, I'm not going to get in the middle of the Gore-Bradley campaign—I know you want me to, but I'm not going to do that for you—[laughter]—because I want you to write about Syria and Israel tomorrow.

Let me say, first of all, Hillary and I said when the health care plan went down that the number of people uninsured would go up. And you would all draw the same conclusion. You would have drawn the same conclusion back then if you spent as many years and as much time studying it as we have.

So what happened is exactly what we've predicted would happen. Ironically, all those

people who attacked me and said I was trying to socialize medicine, which was a ridiculous charge, trying to have the Government take over health care, which is a ridiculous charge, they got their way in that debate, and the consequence is now we now have a higher percentage of Americans whose health care is funded by the Government than we did in 1993. But we also have a higher percentage of people without insurance.

Now, I'm not going to get in the middle of that, but I'll tell you what questions you ought to ask. First of all, anybody who makes any proposal, you have to make certain choices. If you want to cover people who don't have coverage and you accept the premise that they all can't afford it, you have to decide: Are you going to make them buy insurance; are you going to make their employers to pay in? If not, are you going to have the Government do it, or are you going to have a big tax subsidy?

All of those choices have problems with them. You know what the employer mandate problem was. We couldn't pass it, because a lot of people said it's too burdensome, even though we exempted small businesses and tried to give them subsidies. If you give all taxpayers subsidies, the problem is you have to give subsidies to people who already have insurance, and it may operate as an incentive for employers to drop people even faster.

So there is no perfect plan. Let's start with that. There is no plan without difficulty. If it were easy, somebody would have done it already.

Second question is, how much are you going—if you're going to have the taxpayers involved, either in a tax incentive or expenditure program, how much does it cost, and what do you give up? And I think this is the way this thing ought to debate. People ought to actually try to figure out what the consequences of these plans are and evaluate them and decide.

You talked about the prosperity of the country. That's true. We are prosperous. But do we want to—how much do we want to spend on that as compared with eliminating child poverty or continuing to improve education? Are we willing to get into the Social Security surplus? If we're not, are we willing to raise taxes for it? In other words, I think—

whatever the choice is, I think it's important that we be as honest as possible about what it costs, everybody be as honest as possible that there is no perfect plan. And then you be as honest as possible about what else you're giving up if you do it. It's a very complicated issue.

I did my best on it. I am gratified that we finally passed the Child Health Insurance Program. And we might get those numbers down again. We've now—I think we're at about 2 million. I think we've gone from 1 million to 2 million just in the last several months in the number of people covered under CHIP. And if we can get up to 5 million, with CHIP and extra Medicare kids—and the States are really gearing up, now; they're really trying, now—then maybe we can drive that number back down some.

And what the Vice President is trying to do is to target discrete populations, on the theory that you can cover more people for relatively less money. And that's his position, and he believes he can pass that.

Let me just say one other thing. It makes me proud to be a Democrat. I am proud that, number one, that my party is debating this. And as near as I can see, there is no debate going on in the other party. And if they pass the size tax cut plan, they're talking about, they not only won't have any money to help more people get health care; they'll either have to get into the Social Security surplus, or they won't have any more money for education or the environment or anything else. That's the first thing I want to say.

The second thing I want to say is, I'm grateful that my country is doing so well that these kinds of issues can be debated in this way and be seriously debated, but I'm not going to get into handicapping the campaign. I can tell you what questions I think you should ask, how you should analyze it. But there is no perfect solution here. And I'm glad that the two candidates in the Democratic Party are debating it.

Yes, go ahead. I promised these people.

Space Program

Q. Mr. President, in the decade that's just closing, the American people have seen around \$1.5 billion of their tax dollars lost in space—most recently, either up in smoke

in the Martian atmosphere or trashed on Mars, itself. Does NASA need better quality control or better management? And sir, how do you answer Americans who say that that money could be much better spent on more urgent needs here on this planet?

The President. Well, let me try and answer all those questions. First of all, I think Dan Goldin has done a great job at NASA. He's adopted a lot of economy measures and gone for small and more discreet missions, including more unmanned missions, that I think make a lot of sense.

Secondly, we all use the slogan, "Well this isn't rocket science." Well, this is rocket science. We're trying to take a spaceship the size of a boulder and throw it 450 miles into a very uncongenial atmosphere and hit a target, and it isn't easy. I regret that both of those things didn't succeed as much as we all—the first Mars mission we got quite a lot out of—because I think it's important. I think it's important not only for the American tradition of exploration but it's important if we want to know what's—we have to keep doing this if we ever hope to know what's beyond our galaxy. We now know there are billions of them out there, and we know there are all these big black holes in the universe. We know all these things, and I think it's important that we find out.

The third point I'd like to make is that we actually do get a lot of benefits here on Earth from space travel. We get benefits in engineering advances, in material science, in environmental protection, and in medical science. We've made quite a lot of interesting health-related discoveries. I remember going down to the Space Center in Houston and talking to people who were from the vast medical complexes in Houston about all the interesting joint work they were doing.

So I think the American people get things out of it right now. I think we have gotten a lot out of it in the past, and I think we'll get more out of it in the future. So I have always been a big proponent of the space program. They need to analyze what went wrong and figure out how to fix it.

But just think of all the problems we've had along the way with the space program. This is too bad, but this is nothing compared to the tragedy when those astronauts burned

to death when their spaceship was still on the ground. I'll never forget that as long as I live. But they didn't quit, and America didn't quit, and I'm glad. And I don't think we should quit now.

Go ahead.

WTO-China Agreement

Q. Mr. President, one of the things left on your plate for next year is pushing the historic trade agreement with China on Capitol Hill. China's labor standards are clearly not what you and the world community would wish for. And the question is, will it be difficult for you to sell that to members of your own party in Congress? And more broadly, what do you think are the prospects for Congress approving the WTO accord with China?

The President. Well, in our caucus some are for it; some are against it; and some have questions. We have a good deal of support for it and a good deal of opposition to it, and then some have questions. But I'm going to make an all-out effort to pass it. And I'll come back to your labor question in a minute.

I think it is plainly in America's interest. We gave up nothing, in terms of market access, to get this. It's very important that you understand that. What we gave in this was our assent to China's joining the WTO. What we got in return is much more market access on everything from farmers to people in the telecommunications industry. This is a huge economic benefit to the people of the United States. Plus, we have a big and growing trade deficit with China. We've got specific protections on dumping and antisurge protections. So it is in the economic interest of the United States.

Secondly, it is in the strategic interest of the United States. One of the great questions of the next several decades, as China's economy grows to match the size of its population, is whether China and the United States will have a constructive relationship or be at odds. I believe that, just as we worked together in the United Nations, even though we sometimes disagree, we will work together in the WTO. I think having China in a rule-based system for the international economy is profoundly important. And I

think it would be a terrible mistake not to do it.

Now, do I agree with all their labor standards? No. But we shouldn't impose conditions on membership on China that we don't impose on any other country to get into the WTO. What we should do, in any judgment, is to go back to the American position. We ought to begin a dialog on these labor initiatives within the WTO—that's all we ask for—and then we ought to get everybody to ratify the International Convention on Child Labor and observe it and deal with the other most egregious forms of labor abuses in the world. That is the right way to proceed here.

Last question.

National Sovereignty and Internationalism

Q. Mr. President, in future years, what do you see taking great precedence, sir, national sovereignty or international institutions? And how does the world prevent such slaughters as you've had recently in the Balkans, in Africa, or East Timor, without violating national sovereignty or interfering in international affairs?

The President. Well, first of all, at least from the International Declaration of Human Rights, 50 years ago, the world community recognized that sovereignty was not the only value in human society. The Russians, even though they've criticized our intervention in Kosovo—although now I might say the Russian soldiers are doing a very good job there, working with all the other Allies—recently acknowledged in their signing off of the new charter of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, that the internal affairs of a country can become the legitimate concern of others, whether it's in East Timor—now, wait a minute.

So what I think will happen is, national sovereignty is going to be very, very important for a very, very long time. But countries are becoming more interdependent, and they will still have to make decisions about the kinds of internal systems they will have for how their people live together and work together; they will still be able to make decisions about when they will or won't cooperate worldwide in many areas. But if you want

the benefits of interdependence, you have to assume the responsibilities of it.

And we've all recognized that from the beginning of the United Nations, nobody, no country in the United Nations, has given up its sovereignty, even though some people still allege that's true. But the more interdependent the world grows, the more likely we are, in my judgment, to have more broadly shared prosperity, fewer wars, and a better life for everyone. That does not require us to give up our national sovereignty, but it does require us to act in our real national interests.

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Last question.

Minorities on the White House Staff

Q. Thank you. I have another question on the issue of race, and it's on your record of appointing minorities to top-level jobs in your administration. You've talked throughout your career about the importance of diversity and inclusion, and, setting aside your Cabinet and Federal bench appointees, the top seven West Wing jobs in your administration have all been held by whites. Twenty-six people have had the jobs—

The President. I disagree with that. What are they?

Q. Well, Chief of Staff, National Security, Domestic Policy, Economic Adviser, White House Counsel, Press Secretary, Senior Adviser, Counselor—all those jobs have been held by—not a single person of color has held any of those jobs. And I wonder if you could tell us why?

The President. Well, first of all, you might be interested to know there were a couple of people of color that I tried to get to do those jobs but preferred other jobs in the administration. And they had jobs they liked better. And I have—you didn't point out that a lot of those jobs have been held by women, who also had never held those jobs before I came along. And I think that—all I can tell you is I have never not tried to recruit minorities for any job that was open in the White House. And I have never followed a quota system. I have had more blacks who have served in my Cabinet, more Hispanics who served in my Cabinet, more people from Asia have been appointed to my administra-

tion than any previous administration by far. It's not even close. So there was never a decision made. I now have a Hispanic woman who is my Deputy Chief of Staff.

So I never thought about those seven jobs to the exclusion of others. I've tried to make sure that the senior jobs—my Political Director is an African-American woman. Alexis Herman, before she became Secretary of Labor, was head of Public Liaison. I was unaware that those were the seven most important jobs in my Cabinet and in the White House in the way that you said them.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 185th news conference began at 2:36 p.m. in the Dean Acheson Auditorium at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; President Hafiz al-Asad and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara of Syria; Juan Gonzalez, father of Cuban refugee Elian Gonzalez; President Andres Pastrana of Colombia; President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela; former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine; former Senator Bob Dole; former Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr; and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 8, 1999

Thank you. Thank you very much, Peter. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a wonderful ceremony every year, but this year it has been very special. I want to thank Wayne Newton and Renee Fleming, Marty Stuart, Al Roker—he's a good Santa Claus. [*Laughter*] I want to thank the cast from "Chicago" and Ricky Payton and the Urban National Youth Choir and, of course, Colonel Tim Foley and the Marine Corps Band, "The President's Own."

The best perk of the Presidency is the Marine Corps Band, and I want to give them all a hand. They've been wonderful. [*Applause*]

For over 85 years now, our country has gathered around our National Christmas

Tree to celebrate the beginning of this wonderful season of peace and hope. I am honored once again to be part of a tradition I have come to look forward to every year. For me, Christmas always starts now with the Pageant of Peace and the lighting of this beautiful Colorado spruce. And I am especially honored to be here to light the last tree of the 20th century.

In this sacred season, it is time for all of us to renew our commitment to give of ourselves, to reach out to those who are less fortunate, to reach out to those who are different from us, to build the one America of our dreams. In this Pageant of Peace, we celebrate Christmas, also the season of Hanukkah and Kwanzaa and others, all joined by a simple and universal message: that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

This holiday season, we Americans have an awful lot to be thankful for: Our Nation is at peace, and all around the world we are privileged to make peace, from Bosnia to Northern Ireland to the Middle East, the land where a homeless child grew up to be the Prince of Peace.

Just today, in this season, I was proud to announce that after a long, long stalemate, the Israelis and the Syrians have agreed to meet again in just a few days to make their peace.

At the dawn of a new millennium, as we enjoy these wonderful performers and the timeless songs of all of our childhoods, let us rededicate ourselves to the true spirit of Christmas. As we light the National Christmas Tree, let us spread the light of peace and good will toward our family, our friends, our neighbors, and all those across the world, especially those who need it most.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and God bless you.

I'd like to ask, now, the young scouts to come up and join me in lighting the Christmas tree. Caitlin Fong and Chris Alvarez—they're going to come up here. And didn't they do a good job? Let's give them another hand. *[Applause]*

Unlike the sissies, like me, they did it without any coats on, either. I thought they were wonderful. All right, you put your hands on the switch now, and I'm going to count from

three down to one and tell you to flip it, okay? Ready? Three, two, one, go.

Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6 p.m. on the Elipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to Peter Nostrand, chairman, Christmas Pageant of Peace; entertainers Wayne Newton, Renee Fleming, and Marty Stuart; television weatherman Al Roker; and Ricky Payton, Sr., director, BET Urban Nation Voices of Youth H.I.P. H.O.P. Choir; and Col. Timothy W. Foley, USMC, Director, "The President's Own" United States Marine Band.

Remarks on Departure for Worcester, Massachusetts, and an Exchange With Reporters

December 9, 1999

Narrowing the Digital Divide

The President. Good morning. I just thought we ought to come out here in the brisk morning sunshine and wake up together. *[Laughter]* I want to thank the representatives here from all parts of the communications industry, from the foundation world, from various civil rights and other civic groups for being here, and coming in and giving me a chance to make this statement, because I had intended to go to Secretary Daley's conference today on bridging the digital divide, and because I'm going to Worcester, I couldn't do that. So they came in this morning, and we had a visit. I want to thank them for being here and for their commitment and for all those who aren't here but who are at the conference.

This conference is about closing the digital divide. And we have worked hard on that for the last several years in very specific contexts. Under the Vice President's leadership, we have worked to make sure that eventually a digital divide will not deprive business of the technology-savvy workers they need and will not hurt our educational systems today.

We started with the first NetDay in California, back in 1994, when only 3 percent of our classrooms were wired and only 14 percent of our schools were. And we've been working ever since. Now we know that, through the public-private partnerships that have been established all over America,

through the Telecommunications Act and the E-rate, which the FCC set to make sure our poorest schools could afford to be connected, we're now up over 50 percent of the schools, from 3 percent, and over 80 percent of the classrooms, from 14 percent, since 1994. And I think that's pretty good.

I'm very pleased by that, and we're on our way to meeting our goal sometime next year of having all of our schools wired and, soon after that, all of our classrooms wired. I want to thank the Vice President and all the people in various industries who have supported us and helped us in this regard.

But as Secretary Daley's most recent "Falling Through the Net" report shows, there is still a lot more to do. We must connect all of our citizens to the Internet not just in schools and libraries but in homes, small businesses, and community centers. And we must help all Americans gain the skills they need to make the most of the connection. So this morning, as they go back to their meeting, I want to announce a series of new plans and partnerships that will expand on both these efforts to use the combined forces of public, private, and nonprofit sectors, finally to slam shut the digital divide.

First, I have decided to lead a prominent delegation, including top CEO's, on a new markets tour this spring to focus specifically on the digital divide out in America. As we've done on our previous tours, we will visit communities that have not fully participated in our Nation's economic growth. And yet, in the communities we'll also see how partnerships between the public and private sectors can unleash the power of the Internet to link children and adults to a lifetime of learning, to provide access to distant medical care, to empower parents, to assist job seekers, to enhance safety, and foster economic development.

Second, I am signing an executive memorandum to ensure that closing the digital divide will be a vital goal not just for Secretary Daley and for us here in the White House but throughout the Federal Government. For example, I'm directing Secretary Daley to work with the private sector to develop a national strategy for connecting all Americans to the Internet and directing Secretaries Daley, Riley, Herman, Cuomo, and Shalala

to expand our growing network of community technology centers.

I just ask you all to think about this one thing. What do you believe the economic impact would be if Internet access and usage were as dense in America as telephone access and usage? I think it's clear that we need to keep working until we achieve this goal.

Third, with the help of many other groups, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is launching an initiative to empower the entire civil rights community through an expanding civilrights.org website, through leadership forums and even modern-day freedom riders who will bring high-tech training to the doorsteps of nonprofit organizations.

As the Congress of National Black Churches has said, the digital divide is a key civil rights issue of the 21st century. That's why our civil rights organizations must be ready, wired, and able to lead the change.

Fourth, the Benton Foundation is bringing together companies from across the computing, telecommunications, software, and Internet industries, as well as the Urban League and several other large private foundations, to create the Digital Divide Network, an enormous clearinghouse of information for information on public and private efforts to bring technology to underserved communities. For the first time, we'll have one-stop shop for tracking our progress in every community and for learning exactly what's worked and what hasn't.

Now, these are the steps we'll take immediately. I want to thank all the leaders who are here today who are making these initiatives possible and all of those who are going to announce specific things that they and their companies and organizations are doing at the conference. I thank them for the other major commitments they will make, because there is no single big silver bullet here, but we know we have to have a national commitment to closing the digital divide.

I also want to send out an invitation to all of your counterparts around the country who are not able to be with us today but who should join with us in this great national endeavor. Together we have the power to determine exactly what we want the Internet to become. And what we want it to do is

to be an instrument of empowerment, education, enlightenment, and economic advance and community building all across America, regardless of the race, the income, the geography of our citizens. And thanks to these people, we're going to be closer to achieving that goal.

Thank you very much.

Russia and the Situation in Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, there seems to be a divide with President Yeltsin this morning. He has given you something of a long-distance tongue lashing, saying that you've forgotten that Russia is a great power and has a nuclear arsenal. And he accuses you of taking an anti-Russian position.

The President. Well, I'll say again what I said yesterday. I don't think what they're doing will help them to achieve their goal. Their goal, their legitimate goal, is to defeat the Chechen rebels and to stop their terrorism within Russia, to stop their invasion of neighboring provinces like Dagestan. And I don't think displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians will achieve that goal. I don't know what else to say.

I haven't forgotten that. You know, I didn't think he'd forgotten that America was a great power when he disagreed with what I did in Kosovo. I mean, we can't get too serious about all the—let's not talk about what the leaders are saying and all these words of criticism. Let's focus on what the country is doing. Is it right or wrong? Will it work or not? What are the consequences?

I think—I don't agree with what's going on there. And I think I have an obligation to say so.

Thank you. I've got to go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 a.m. on the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Memorandum on Narrowing the Digital Divide

December 9, 1999

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

*Subject: Narrowing the "Digital Divide:"
Creating Opportunities for All Americans in
the Information Age*

Information tools, such as the personal computer and the Internet, are increasingly important to economic success and full participation in all aspects of American society. People with computers and Internet access can use these tools to find a job, acquire new skills, start a small business, get lower prices for goods and services, and become more informed citizens.

Currently, not all Americans are enjoying the benefits of the Information Age tools. In July 1999, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration issued a report, *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, which found a growing gap between those with access to these tools and those without. Black and Hispanic households are only two-fifths as likely to have Internet access as white households. Households with incomes of \$75,000 and higher, in urban areas, are more than twenty times as likely to have access to the Internet as households at the lowest income levels, and more than nine times as likely to have a computer at home. As information technology plays an ever-increasing role in Americans' economic and social lives, we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

Fortunately, competition and advances in technology are driving down the cost of computers and Internet access, which will make these new Information Age tools affordable for more Americans. I believe that we should set a national goal of making computers and Internet access available for every American. Furthermore, we should explore ways of using technology to expand the economic opportunities for those Americans who have not yet enjoyed the benefits of our prosperity.

Accordingly, I am directing executive departments and agencies ("agencies") to take the following specific actions to help Americans benefit from advances in information technology:

1. The Secretary of Commerce shall work with the private sector and others to develop a national strategy for making computers and the Internet accessible to all Americans, with the goal of significantly narrowing the "digital divide."
2. The Secretary of Commerce shall continue to measure the level of connectivity of Americans to telecommunications and information tools, and report periodically on the relationship of income, education, race, gender, geography, and age to Americans' access to these tools.
3. The Secretaries of Education, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Commerce shall:
 - (a) expand our growing network of Community Technology Centers to provide access to technology for low-income Americans; and
 - (b) encourage the development of information technology applications that would help enable low-income Americans to start and manage their own small businesses.
4. The Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Commerce shall work with the private sector to upgrade the information technology skills of America's workforce, particularly workers living in disadvantaged urban and rural communities.
5. The Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall highlight and disseminate the lessons learned from their grant programs and educational technology initiatives, with an emphasis on underserved citizens, to increase the number of communities across the Nation that could reap the benefits of information technologies for their residents.
6. Items 1-5 of this memorandum and my July 1, 1997, and November 30, 1998, memoranda shall be conducted subject to the availability of appropriations and consistent with agencies' priorities and my budget, and to the extent permitted by law.
7. The Vice President shall continue his leadership in coordinating the United States Government's electronic commerce strategy. Further, I direct that the heads of executive departments and agencies report to the Vice President and to me on their progress in meeting the terms of this memorandum, through the Electronic Commerce Working Group (ECWG) in its annual report. To the extent that substantial new policy issues emerge, the analysis and action on those policies will be coordinated in a manner consistent with the responsibilities of the ECWG, the National Economic Council, and the Domestic Policy Council, as appropriate.

William J. Clinton

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Firefighters in Worcester

December 9, 1999

Thank you. First, to the wonderful families of our six fallen heroes, who the Vice President and I had a chance to visit with before the beginning of this service. To their colleagues in the fire department, their friends in this wonderful community. To the thousands of men and women in uniform who have come here to join the Mayor, the Governor, the Senators, the Members of Congress, the Bishop and members of the clergy; President Whitehead and members of the firefighters; especially to Chief Budd and Frank Raffa and all the grieving members of this fire department, too.

I hope you can all sense how clearly we know, in spite of our talks, that words have a poor power to alleviate the pain you feel now. But as you look around this vast hall and know that there are thousands and thousands more standing outside and other

places, we hope that by our collective presence we will speak louder than words in saying that your tragedy is ours, your men are ours, our whole country honors them and you. We grieve with you, and we will stay with you.

More than two and a half centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin wrote an essay entitled, "Brave Men at Fires." He might have written it last week. This is what he said: "Neither cold nor darkness will deter good people from hastening to the dreadful place to quench the flame. They do it not for the sake of reward or fame, but they have a reward in themselves, and they love one another."

Today we honor six brave men who found a reward in firefighting, who loved one another, six men who, in turn, richly rewarded this community. So they hastened to the dreadful place to save others. For them, there was no other way.

In the book of Isaiah, God asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah says, "Here am I. Send me."

When the question again rang from the smoking skies last week, Paul Brotherton, Timothy Jackson, Jeremiah Lucey, Jay Lyons, Joseph McGuirk, and Thomas Spencer also answered with a single voice: Here am I. Send me.

They were firefighters to the core, heroes already, as we have heard, to their friends and loved ones, not to mention the people they saved through the years. For all six, being a firefighter was more than a job; it was in their blood. So when they went into that building that night, they were following their dream to serve, to save lives, and to stick together.

Like their fellow firefighters everywhere, they embodied the best of our Nation of commitment and community, of teamwork and trust, values at the core of our character; values reflected in the daily service not only of those we lost but in this awesome parade of men and women who have come from all over our country and from some countries beyond our borders to honor their comrades and console their families.

Too often, we take them for granted, our firefighters. In the days ahead, I hope every American will find an occasion to thank those in their communities who stand ready every

day to put their lives on the line when the alarm bell rings.

In the Book of Kings, we find the wonderful story of the prophet Elijah, who climbs a mountain to seek the voice of God. A wind shatters rocks in pieces, but the Bible says, the Lord is not in the wind. Then, there's an earthquake and then a fire, but God is not in the earthquake or in the fire. But then, the Scripture says, "after the fire, a still, small voice." It is that still, small voice that spoke to those six good men, that moved their souls to service and sacrifice. The still, small voice that endures through the ages, that inspires the songs and words we have all shared today, that must now carry this group of grieving families through their grief to going on.

Today we thank God for the lives our fallen firefighters lived. We hope their families can remember the good and happy times and bring some smiles through their tears. We commend their souls to God's eternal loving care, and we pray that His still, small voice will bring strength and healing to these families and to this wonderful community who loved them so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at Worcester's Centrum Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Raymond V. Mariano of Worcester; Gov. Argeo Paul Cellucci of Massachusetts; Bishop of Worcester Daniel P. Reilly; Dennis L. Budd, chief, Worcester Fire Department; Frank Raffa, president, Worcester Fire Fighters Local 1009; and Alfred K. Whitehead, general president, International Association of Fire Fighters.

Statement on Renewed Flooding in Vietnam

December 9, 1999

I was saddened to learn of renewed flooding in the central provinces of Vietnam, which were already inundated by heavy rains last month. On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered losses and are struggling to rebuild, including the families of many Americans of Vietnamese descent.

The United States is providing emergency assistance to support flood relief efforts, just

as we provided almost \$600,000 in November to deliver supplies and build flood-resistant homes. We stand ready to provide further help to meet the urgent needs of those affected by the flooding and to help the Vietnamese people better withstand future flooding.

**Statement on Signing Legislation
To Protect a Segment of the
Chattahoochee River**

December 9, 1999

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2140, a bill that will enhance the protection of a 48-mile segment of the Chattahoochee River, a vital natural resource for the Atlanta metropolitan area and an important unit of the National Park System. This legislation ensures that the natural, scenic, recreational, and historic values of one of our Nation's great urban rivers will be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

This Act provides the foundation for a cooperative effort by the Federal Government, the State of Georgia, local governments, and private entities to link the separate units of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area through purchases of remaining open space along the Chattahoochee River corridor north of Atlanta. It gives the National Park Service the authority to expand the land base of the recreation area from approximately 6,800 acres to 10,000 acres through a revision of the boundary, by adding undeveloped land within the 2,000-foot river bank corridors. The National Park Service also will be authorized to exclude some properties currently within the boundary that are no longer suitable for the park because they have been developed.

From the time the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area was established in 1978, the pace of residential and commercial development in the Chattahoochee River corridor has accelerated rapidly. A U.S. Census Bureau report issued earlier this year names Forsyth County, Georgia, where the recreation area boundary begins, the fastest-growing county in the Nation. The three other counties in which the recreation area lies are also experiencing a surge in growth.

This Act will enable the National Park Service to spend funds that were appropriated in the 105th Congress, as well as funds that have been or will be contributed by State and local governments and private interests, to acquire the remaining open space in the Chattahoochee River corridor before those properties are developed for residential and commercial purposes.

The Act is strongly supported on a bipartisan basis by Georgia's congressional representatives, Georgia State and local government officials, the National Park Service, and private organizations, including the Trust for Public Land, which has played a key role in bringing together the various interests involved and developing a vision for the future of this critical area. It is with great respect and gratitude for those who made this legislation possible that I sign H.R. 2140 today.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 9, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 2140, approved December 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-154.

**Statement on Signing Legislation To
Establish Federal Criminal Penalties
for Commerce in Depiction of
Animal Cruelty**

December 9, 1999

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1887, a bill that would establish Federal criminal penalties for the "creation, sale, or possession" of "a depiction of animal cruelty" with the intent to distribute such a depiction in interstate or foreign commerce, except when the depiction has "serious religious, political, scientific, educational, journalistic, historical, or artistic value."

I strongly support the objectives of this legislation. Its enactment should assist in reducing or eliminating some of the deplorable and indefensible practices that were identified during the Congress's deliberations on the bill and described in the House Judiciary Committee report on the bill.

Concerns were raised, however, during congressional consideration of H.R. 1887 that its application in certain contexts may

violate the First Amendment of the Constitution. It is important to avoid constitutional challenge to this legislation and to ensure that the Act does not chill protected speech. Accordingly, I will broadly construe the Act's exception and will interpret it to require a determination of the value of the depiction as part of a work or communication, taken as a whole. So construed, the Act would prohibit the types of depictions, described in the statute's legislative history, of wanton cruelty to animals designed to appeal to a prurient interest in sex. I will direct the Department of Justice to enforce the Act accordingly.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 9, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 1887, approved December 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-152.

**Statement on Signing the U.S.
Holocaust Assets Commission
Extension Act of 1999**

December 9, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 2401, the "U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999." This legislation, which extends the mandate of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States for 1 year, is a clear demonstration of America's determination to pursue justice for Holocaust victims and their families.

The United States has led the renewed struggle for justice and compensation on behalf of the victims of the Holocaust. One year ago, delegations from 44 countries and 13 nongovernmental organizations met at the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets convened by the Department of State and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. During the Washington Conference, I announced the public and governmental members of the Presidential Advisory Commission, which was created to investigate and advise on the fate of Holocaust victims' assets that came into the possession or control of the United States Government.

Since then, the Presidential Advisory Commission has been hard at work and esti-

mates that it will have to examine more than 45 million pages of documents. To our Nation's credit, the amount of information to be reviewed increases every week as remaining Nazi-era documents are declassified. The U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999 provides the Presidential Advisory Commission with additional time and authorizes additional resources needed to complete the review of the historical record of American activity during one of the darkest periods of this century.

The Commission's research demonstrates irrefutably that we in the United States are willing to hold ourselves to the same high standard of truth about Holocaust assets to which we have held other nations. The extension of the Presidential Advisory Commission sends a strong message, both at home and abroad, that we are committed to examining difficult aspects of our history and determining how to build a better world for our children in the next millennium.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 9, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 2401, approved December 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-155.

**Statement on Signing the John H.
Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources
System Act**

December 9, 1999

I am pleased to sign into law S. 1866, the "John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Act." Renaming the Coastal Barrier Resources System in Senator Chafee's honor is an appropriate tribute to a man who worked so hard—and so successfully—to find common ground in the struggle to protect and preserve the environment for future generations.

Senator Chafee authored the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, a law which protects pristine and fragile coastal barriers from development by restricting Federal expenditures that would otherwise encourage such development. This Act has successfully minimized the loss of human life by discouraging development in high-risk areas. It also has reduced

the wasteful expenditures of Federal resources and protected the natural resources associated with coastal barriers. Today, approximately 3 million acres of fragile coastal barrier lands are part of the Coastal Barrier Resources System created by the Act.

Senator Chafee's legacy of achievements in environmental protection is extraordinary and far ranging. He worked tirelessly to ensure the protection of our land, air, and water and he took special pride in the success of the Coastal Barrier Resources Act. For this reason, it is especially fitting that we honor Senator Chafee by renaming the Coastal Barrier Resources System as the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 9, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 1866, approved December 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-167.

Statement on Signing the Digital Theft Deterrence and Copyright Damages Improvement Act of 1999

December 9, 1999

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3456, the "Digital Theft Deterrence and Copyright Damages Improvement Act of 1999." This legislation will increase for the first time since January 1988 the statutory damages that a copyright holder may recover for certain copyright infringements. This increase in penalties would be an effective deterrent to would-be pirates of copyrighted works. This Act also directs the United States Sentencing Commission to issue sentencing guidelines to ensure that sentences for criminal offenses against intellectual property are sufficiently severe to deter such offenses. I fully support efforts to make sentences in criminal cases involving intellectual property offenses true deterrents against the commission of those offenses and am pleased that H.R. 3456 will require the Sentencing Com-

mission to address this matter on an expedited basis.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
December 9, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 3456, approved December 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-160.

Message on the Observance of Ramadan, 1999

December 9, 1999

Warm greetings to Muslims across America and around the world as you celebrate the start of Ramadan, a holy month of prayer, fasting, reflection, and good works.

Islam is one of the world's most prominent religions and a source of profound strength and guidance for millions of Americans. Members of the Muslim American community have made enormous contributions to our national life. I am especially pleased that my alma mater, Georgetown University, has named its first Muslim chaplain, reflecting the increasing recognition in our country of the Islamic faith and our firm commitment to religious tolerance. Sadly, in too many communities around the world, Muslims and other believers are unable to worship according to their religious traditions. We look forward to the day when people of all faiths can freely express their beliefs without fear of persecution or discrimination.

Each year, Ramadan brings a promise of renewal and hope for the world. I pray that, as the new moon rises, we will witness the beginning of a new era of tolerance around the globe. As the followers of Islam celebrate the revelation of God's word to Muhammad, we join you in honoring his call for harmony and peace.

Bill Clinton

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner

December 9, 1999

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. It's been a long, but a wonderful, night.

I am delighted to see you all. The most important thing I can say is, thank you. I thank Joe Andrew for his increasingly energetic leadership. *[Laughter]*

I thank Ed Rendell. For those of you who don't know him, you will get to know him. Philadelphia had lost jobs for 30 years before Ed Rendell became mayor, and now they're gaining jobs rapidly. They had lost population; they had had a crime rate going up—everything. Do you remember how the Vice President used to say in the '92 campaign, everything that should be up is down, everything that should be down is up? That was Philadelphia times five. Now everything that should be up is up, thanks to Ed Rendell, and he's going to keep our party up, as well.

I want to thank Lorretta Bowen and John Cooke and John Merrigan and Carol Pensky for this dinner tonight. It was wonderful. And I want to thank my friend Walter Shorenstein. You have already honored him, and you heard the Vice President talk about the big achievements in his life. I think it is remarkable: He reflects, first, a characteristic I've seen in so many of you. You've been so phenomenally generous. Many of you in this room tonight could be making more money in a short run under the other party's policies. You know it as well as I do. And you came here because you believe that we all ought to go forward together and that we ought to keep our eye on the long run, social justice and the long-term strength of America. And Walter has stood for that all of his life.

He is also an uncommonly decent person. I'll just tell you two things. First of all, not very long ago I was out in Northern California, and I had a day to kill, and I hadn't seen my little girl in a long time. And it's inconvenient for the President to go any place quietly. Walter had a place south of San Francisco; he let me go there and spend the day with my daughter. That meant more to me than anything he could do for me. I'll never forget it as long as I live.

And I'll tell you something else. You heard the Vice President say he helped to save the Giants. I was talking to Walter one night and I said, "You know, Walter, I think the greatest baseball player that ever lived was Willie Mays." Next time I go to dinner at Walter's

house, Willie Mays is there. *[Laughter]* And I might add, number 8 on ESPN's list of the 50 Greatest Athletes of the 20th century. Almost high enough.

So this guy has never lost his sense of personal things, which I think matter most to us all when it's all said and done. And I thank you for honoring him. I hope that all of you feel honored, to some extent, through him. Sometimes I think we take and take and take, and we don't take enough time to give and to say thank you. And I'm honored that we could do this for Walter and, through him, for all of you who stick with us through thick and thin.

I also want to say a word about the Vice President and Mrs. Gore. I have spent a lot of time studying the history of our country and the institutions that have made it work. When I became a candidate for President, Hillary and I talked about a lot of things. I said, "I'll tell you one thing I'm going to do. If I win this nomination, I'm going to appoint somebody to be my running mate that I would feel good if I dropped dead, if something, God forbid, happened to me, that I am convinced would be a great President. And in the meanwhile, I'm going to make it a real job."

You know that when Harry Truman became President, he did not even know about the atomic bomb? A lot of people don't know that. Franklin Roosevelt had a lot of great qualities, but we had lost a lot of Presidents up to then, and they were still just picking Vice Presidents for the most sort of shallow political reasons. Thank God, Harry Truman turned out to be a great man and a great President.

And then it got a little better. When John Kennedy picked Lyndon Johnson, he was ready for the job. When Dwight Eisenhower picked Richard Nixon, he had broader responsibilities. And then when Jimmy Carter picked Walter Mondale, he qualitatively increased the role of the Vice President. And to his credit, President Reagan followed his lead in giving more responsibility to then Vice President Bush. But I want every person in this room to know that Al Gore has had, 2, 3, 4, 5, times as much responsibilities as any person who has ever held this office and

he has done a superb job discharging every single one of them.

You know, we've had a lot of fun together over the years, and we kid each other mercilessly. When Arkansas plays Tennessee, he usually wins; sometimes I do. And he always says, "You know, the difference between you and me," he said to me, "is you don't have a vote in Congress, and I do."—[laughter]—"At least, every now and then I do. And whenever I vote, we win." [Laughter]

Well, we're all celebrating this economy, but he cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate to make it a reality. And when we were fighting to pass commonsense gun legislation in the Senate after Colombine, and all we wanted to do was to apply the Brady background checks to the gun shows and the urban flea markets, require child trigger locks on the guns, he cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate to pass it.

One day we were sitting around in one of our weekly lunches—which I miss now, as I confessed in my press conference—he said, "You know, we've got to do something about getting more computers into the schools, and not just a computer for their educational programs. We've got to hook them up to the Internet, and it will revolutionize educational opportunities. But if we don't do anything about it, only wealthier schools will get it."

So he came up with this idea that the FCC, now that we're revolutionizing telecommunications—something else he was the lead on our administration when we rewrote the telecommunications law for the first time in 60 years, or he created 300,000 new high-wage jobs in America—he said, "We've got to give a discount to the poor schools, to the hospitals, to the libraries, so they can afford to hook on the Internet. And we need to try to get the business community in. We've got this whole private sector group to come help us get the connections done."

Now, when we started this in 1994—it was his idea—3 percent of the classrooms and 14 percent of the schools were connected; most schools just had one connection in the library or something—1994, 3 percent of the classrooms, 14 percent of the schools. Today, thanks to him, over 50 percent of the classrooms in over 80 percent of the schools in

America have an Internet connection. And I could go through what he's done in helping us to reduce the nuclear threat and dealing with a whole wide range of foreign challenges and the environment. We set aside 40 million roadless acres in our national forests not very long ago. This administration has now protected more land than any administration in the history of the United States, except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, thanks to his leadership on the environment.

So what I want you to know is, he has been a good and faithful servant of the people of this country. And he knows more than any person who has ever held that job. And he's had more experience than anybody who's run in my lifetime that is relevant to this work.

The other thing I would like to say is, his wife has given us, Hillary and me, personally, but our administration and this country, many gifts. I want to thank them for the family conference that they run every year in Tennessee, that many of you have been a part of. What they taught us about family leave and child care, health care for children, many other issues. And I want to thank her for forcing me to recognize the woefully inadequate response that the people of the United States have to the needs of mental health in this country, and taking a lead and making us do better. Thank you.

I say this because this is a political dinner, but most of us are here—and we're Democrats instead of Republicans because we're motivated by these kinds of issues and because we think America should go up or down together. And one way or the other, if we're going up, we've got to go up together. And I honor them, and I thank them for that.

I will be very brief in what I want to say to you. There's no point in my reciting what you already know about the progress of the last 7 years. Except I will say that there is something special about the fact that it was done by our party, because we believe you can advance the economy and social justice at the same time.

So it's not just 20 million jobs and the longest peacetime expansion in history; in February it will be the longest one in history. Look underneath that: the lowest female unemployment in 40 years; the lowest single-parent household poverty in 42 years; the

lowest African-American unemployment and poverty ever recorded; the lowest Hispanic unemployment ever recorded, the lowest Hispanic poverty in a generation; the last 3 years, finally people in the bottom of the income groups, with their income rising as fast or faster than those in the top. This is a democratic recovery, and we're going forward together.

I want to say this about the next 14 months of my term and the decision the American people will make about the leadership of this country, the Presidency and in the Congress for the next 4 years. Over Thanksgiving I had my whole extended family with me, and then we had a few friends come up to Camp David and a lot of kids around, and I just love that.

And this beautiful little 6 year old girl looked at me, and she said, "Now, how old are you, really"—6 year old girl. [*Laughter*] And I said, "I'm 53." And she said, "That's a lot." [*Laughter*] And lamentably, she's right about that. And I want to say this, and I want every one of you to think about it. In my lifetime, in my 53 years, our country has never had the blessings and the opportunities and, therefore, the responsibilities it has at this moment. We have never had at the same time a strong economy, an improving social climate, strong self-confidence among the American people, with the absence of crisis at home or threat abroad.

We had an economy that was very strong in the early sixties that came a cropper because of the competing demands of civil rights and poverty at home and the war in Vietnam abroad. You can go back all through the 20th century, and you will not find a time when we've had prosperity, social progress, national self-confidence, the absence of internal crisis or external threat.

And what I want to say to you is, that imposes on our party not bragging rights for the last 7 years but an enormous responsibility to keep the American people focused on the future. Anybody can take a deep breath and summon themselves to great efforts in tough times. The great British essayist Samuel Johnson said, "Nothing so concentrates the mind as the prospect of one's own destruction."

Every one of us can remember when times were tough and we got right at it. But also,

most people can remember a time in your personal life, your family life, your business life, when things were going so well, you just lost your concentration or became indulgent or got distracted. This country faces a great choice here.

The Vice President talked about the tax cut that Congress passed that I vetoed. I was so proud of the American people because times are good and people have been through tough times. And a lot of people still have difficulties in their own lives, and they could have said, "Hey, give us a break here. Don't tell me about paying off the debt for the first time since 1835 or this other rigamarole. Just show me the money."

But they didn't do it. They said just what he said, that we like what we have and we want to go on. We want to leave a stronger America for our children. We want to get out of debt. We want to deal with the aging of America. We want to be able to invest in our children's education. What I want to tell you—I think that's what is at stake here: whether we will assume the responsibility of our success or indulge ourselves and squander it.

Yes, you know, you can say whatever you want to about how I say whatever I say about the Vice President. Everything I said was true, and I believe it. But I'm a lot more interested than the whole country in our children and grandchildren even than I am him. I'm sitting here talking to you about whether we're going to make the most of this prosperity. And I've been here for 53 years. And like the kid said, that's a lot. And we've never had this kind of chance before.

Are we going to deal with the aging of America or not? We're going to double the number of people over 65 in 30 years. I hope to be one of them. We could take Social Security out beyond the life of the baby boomers by doing one simple thing: Just take the interest we're saving on the debt from not spending the Social Security surplus and put it into Social Security. And we ought to do that. We can lengthen the life of Medicare; we can provide prescription drug benefits to the 75 percent of our seniors who can't afford the medicine that they need.

We can radically improve our schools. We can deal with the challenge of global warming and all the other environmental challenges and do it with new technology and smart investments that will grow this economy faster, not weaken it. We can extend economic opportunity to the people and places that have been left behind. In spite of all the happy talk, unemployment tonight is 73 percent on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. I'm going home to the Arkansas Delta tomorrow, right across the river from Memphis, where the Vice President spent countless days. And he can tell you that, except for the Native American reservations, the poorest parts of America are still in the Delta between Memphis and New Orleans. Or in Appalachia or in any number of our inner cities. Or upstate New York, which would be 49th in job growth if that were a separate State. Or the rural areas of New England and any number of other places. So I think we ought to give people big incentives to invest there, the same incentives we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America and Asia and Africa, to try to grow the American economy now in the places that have been left behind.

No, it's not fashionable to talk about, because when I talk about trade, I make everybody mad. And he's doing a pretty good job of it, too. *[Laughter]* But let me just say, I think I'm right about saying that labor standards and the environment ought to be a part of the global economy. And you know I'm pro-trade. I don't think you can make a serious case that the world is not better off. And globalization is not a bad thing if you do it right.

You look at the places he mentioned. Do you really believe that we would have had to go to war in Kosovo and use our military power in Bosnia to stop slaughter there if the Balkans were the richest place in Europe, instead of the poorest? Do you believe we would have had 800,000 people slaughtered in 90 days in Rwanda in a tribal war if their incomes were 10 times higher than they are?

And I have to say—you mentioned Ireland—I'm very proud of the role we played in the Irish peace process. And I'm very proud of Senator George Mitchell. *[Applause]* But I want to tell you something—

you can clap for him. But make no mistake about it, the fact that some American banks were sending their data processing to be done in Northern Ireland by poor people who didn't have any other jobs, the fact that the Irish Republic had the fastest growing economy in Europe, and all those young people saw what was going on in the rest of Europe, and they said, "This is nuts. Let's let it go." That had a lot to do with that.

So we have to find a way to put that human face on the global economy. And we've got to decide who we trust to do it and how to get there.

Finally, there are lots of other things we could talk about. We've got to be willing to take on some difficult questions in the future. You know, all that nice talk Al said to me about all these tough decisions that I had to make. When we first got together after the election he said, "You know, I've spent a lot more time in Washington, and I'm going to tell you, you can't imagine how hard these decisions are going to be. And it's just like developing muscles; it's going to be agonizing for you at the beginning, and you've just got to grit your teeth and make them, and it will get easier and easier and easier."

And like so many things he told me, it turned out to be right. But it was a lot easier because he was there with me, helping me. He was right when we took on guns. He was right when we took on big tobacco. He was right when we took on the health care industry on the Patients' Bill of Rights and on so many other issues. So we have a lot of things to do.

Now, I just want to make one last point. I'm going to keep working for the next 14 months, and I think the best thing I can do for all of our candidates, from top to bottom, is to try to be the best President I can be. And I'll do my best to do that. And I am profoundly committed to renting back the House and Senate because a lot of those people lost their seats—a lot of those people lost their seats because they voted for the economic plan and they voted for the Brady bill and they voted for the assault weapons ban and they took the tough decisions. And unfortunately, they had to stand for reelection in 1994, before the American people knew we were right. And we owe it to them. And

besides that, I've got a minor interest in what happens in New York. [*Laughter*]

But let me say to all of you, if I had this proverbial encounter tonight, and somebody said, "Well, you can't stay 14 months. You've got to go." And the genie showed up and said I could have not three wishes but one. It wouldn't be anything I've said on this list. I would wish for an America that is truly one America, that can bridge the lines of race and gender and religion and sexual orientation, all these things that divide us.

If you look around the world today—that's why we're going to try to pass the hate crimes bill. That's why we're going to try to pass the employment and nondiscrimination act. Because if you look at the world we're living in at the end of the cold war, when people are not artificially bound into blocks where they feel threatened by their very existence, it was inevitable that we'd have an upsurge of nationalism and some of the things that have happened.

But it is unconscionable that on the verge of a new millennium, when there are 20,000 people making a living on eBay trading, when we're about to decode the whole mystery of the human genome, when some people think we'll find out what's in the black holes in space in a few years, it is unconscionable that the biggest problem society faces is the oldest problem of society, which is that we're afraid of, prone to hate, prone to dehumanize, and prone to brutalize people who are different from us. [*Applause*] Thank you.

There is so much hope around the world. I announced yesterday the resumption of talks next week between the Israelis and the Syrians. I know they're working hard to make peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We even have the Greeks and the Turks talking about Cyprus. We've got all kinds of things going.

And for all of the hate crimes and terrible things that have happened in America, we're not bedeviled like that, but it's still there under the surface. One of our major newspapers today had two breathtaking pictures, side-by-side, on the front page of the young soldier that was beaten to death and the other young soldier that was convicted of killing him. He was beaten to death because he was gay.

And you know, I'm not running for anything; I'm just telling you I felt as a human being. I looked at that and my heart ached for that young man whose life was extinguished. Then my heart ached for the young man whose life was ruined, because somewhere along the way people taught him—you're not born feeling this way—people taught him that it was okay to dehumanize that other young person, who wore the uniform of his country. Both of them have committed to die for this country if I send them some place, God forbid, which might cost them their lives. And yet, that happened.

So I say to you, not to bring you down but to lift you up, the reason I am working as hard as I can to be a good President, the reason I'm here with you, besides to thank you, the reason I feel as strongly as I do about the Vice President and all of our campaigns for the Senate and the House is that we may never have this chance again. And we have to make the most of it. And we owe it to the American people to get out there and get our message out, stand up, fight, show up for them every day. Never forget that the people we're really fighting for are the people that served our food here tonight and their children. And countless other people who will never have a chance to come to an event like this.

And I'm telling you, if you do what you know to do next year and you tell people what the record is and what we stand for, then we'll have a great 14 months, and we'll have a great celebration in November of 2000.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, and Mayor Edward G. Rendell of Philadelphia, general chair, Democratic National Committee; dinner cochair, Loretta Bowen, director of political affairs, Communications Workers of America, John F. Cooke, president, the Disney Channel, Carol Pensky, former treasurer, Democratic National Committee, and John Merrigan, cochair, Democratic Business Council; Walter Shorenstein, president, Shorenstein Company LP; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland.

**Remarks to the Chamber of
Commerce in Little Rock, Arkansas**
December 10, 1999

Thank you. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Shelby; and thank you, Joe, for your leadership. They've both been friends of mine a long time, and it's good to see this chamber so well led. And thank you, Joe, for your pledge of support.

Congratulations to Bob and to Beverly on the well-deserved award. I'm delighted to be up here with Dr. Reed and Jesse and Janet, and to be here with all of you. I thank Senator Pryor and Congressman Snyder for joining me, and Mayor Dailey. I think our speaker, Bob Johnson, is here, and I was accompanied this morning by Secretary Riley, the Secretary of Education, from Washington, and Rodney Slater, the Secretary of Transportation. I thank them for coming with me.

I want to thank you for this award. Herschel Friday was a friend of mine. I was sitting here, racing through my mind, over all the things he asked me to do over the 12 years I was Governor, all the time there was one more emergency at Oak Lawn Park, which he and I had a vested interest in. I don't know if Beth Friday is here, but I want to thank them both for their friendship, and thank you for this award. And Beth, if you're here, I love you, and I'm glad to see you. Thank you.

I also want to thank the Philander Smith choir. You know, whenever I have to take a trip, I stay up late the night before, and I try to get all the work done that I might have done in the office if I had stayed there. I talked to Hillary last night for the last time about 1 o'clock in the morning. She said to tell you hello, and she's doing well, and Chelsea's doing fine.

But anyway, when I got up this morning, I was a little tired. I walked in here, and I heard the Philander choir singing, and I'm ready to speak now. *[Laughter]*

Let me say something I'm sure a lot of you know, but this is my first opportunity to speak to the press today. I want to express my profound sadness for the crash of the C-130 that flew out of the Little Rock Air Force Base, crashed in Kuwait last night with—96 people were on board; 3 were

killed; 21 were injured. They were trying to land in terrible, terrible weather. And I thank them for their service, and I extend my deepest condolences to the families of those who were lost.

We also lost a helicopter off the coast of San Diego yesterday with 18 people aboard; 11 were recovered safely. We have not recovered the other 7, and our thoughts and prayers are with them. I say this just to make a simple point, that you might mention the next time you see someone in uniform. We do not have to be at war for that to be dangerous work. Most people have no earthly idea how dangerous it is to fly those fast planes and to fire those powerful weapons and to undergo the rigorous training that they have to undergo.

We are richly repaid for it. We didn't lose a single pilot in combat in the action in Kosovo, but it is inherently dangerous work. So when you see some people from the air base, thank them for putting their lives on the line for the rest of us every day.

Shelby mentioned a couple of times that I have worked very closely with this chamber for a long time. I don't know how many times I went to your old building trying to hustle some business for the greater Little Rock area or deal with some issue that was before us in common. I think you picked the right changes; there are big—I mean, the right theme. There are big changes coming. And the pace of change will only accelerate in the years ahead. I love the logo. I asked Shelby who designed the logo, and he told me, and congratulations to you.

I think that what I would like to do today is to talk a little about the library and, first, a little about the last 7 years and the next 14 months that I have left to serve as your President. I want to begin by thanking the people of Arkansas who gave me the chance to serve for a dozen years as Governor, without which I could never have become President, who gave me the chance to learn over those dozen years what makes things really work, which is very often not what dominates the headline, the time, and the energy and the emotions of people in Washington.

I want to thank those who serve in this administration. We have been so blessed. I want to begin by mentioning Mack McLarty,

who came down with me today. He was my first Chief of Staff; he oversaw the passage, by a single vote in both Houses, of the '93 economic plan, which was the single most important thing that gave us this economic boom, that got rid of that deficit, that drove the interest rates down, and got investment up in this country. He also oversaw the passage of NAFTA, the Brady bill, the family and medical leave law, and set in motion a teamwork that, according to one Harvard scholar, he said I had the most loyal Cabinet since Thomas Jefferson's second administration. That is in no small measure because of the leadership that Mack McLarty gave to the White House in those early days. And I thank him for it, and equally, for his later work as our Special Envoy to Latin America, where we have reestablished ties that had been too long neglected with so many countries.

I want to thank Secretary Slater, who is here with me today; James Lee Witt, the most popular FEMA Director in the history of the country; Bob Nash; Bruce Lindsey; Nancy Harnreich, who came down with me today; Mel French, our Protocol Ambassador; Janis Kearney; Carl Whillock, who came with me today, the farmers' advocate in the Department of Agriculture; Mike Gaines now runs the Federal Parole Commission; my scheduler, Stephanie Streett; Carol Rasco, my former Domestic Policy Adviser, now runs the national America Reads program, has over a thousand colleges in America with young people volunteering to go into the grade schools and make sure every child can read independently by the age of 8; Brady Anderson from Helena—a lot of you know him—is now the Director of the Agency for International Development, the most important agency in the Federal Government in dealing with the poor countries of the world. Craig Smith was my political director and had a number of other important jobs in the White House—probably the least political person to work with us from any State; Hershel Gober, the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs; young Kris Engskov from Berryville is here with me today. I first met him when he was 4 years old. Now he's my personal aide. So between

Kris and Nancy, at least Arkansas still runs most of my life.

There are literally scores of others I might mention from our State who have come to Washington, who are never noted in the press but who serve with real distinction, and I am grateful for them. And you should be proud of them.

Now let me just take a minute to sort of walk back through memory lane. In October of 1991, when I declared for President on the steps of the old State House, I did it because I became convinced that there was a limit to what Arkansas could do unless America changed direction and because I really felt that our country had an enormous potential to make the most of these big changes we've been talking about.

But it was a time of economic distress, social decline, deep political division, and the whole enterprise of Government had been profoundly discredited. It's almost impossible to remember what it was like just a few short years ago.

I felt, based on what I had learned working with you, that the country ought to work more like we tried to work. Yes, we'd have our political differences; yes, we'd fight at election time; sometimes, we'd fight in-between; but that we ought to have a unifying theory of the public's business. And so I asked the American people to give me a chance, along with Vice President Gore, to implement a vision of opportunity for every responsible American, to challenge every citizen to be responsible, and to build a community that involved all of our people in a world where America was still the leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity.

And we battled through the politics; we battled through a whole flurry of special interests; we battled through our fair share of mistakes; but we never forgot who we were working for or what the mission was. And I hope that all of you, without whom I would never have become President, can take some pride in the results.

We have the longest peacetime expansion in our history. In February, it will become the longest economic expansion ever, including that which embraced World War II. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years,

the lowest poverty rates in 20 years, the highest homeownership in history. We have the lowest African-American and Hispanic unemployment rates ever recorded, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest poverty rate among single-parent households in 46 years, the first back-to-back balanced budgets and surpluses in 42 years, and the Federal Government is now the smallest it's been in 37 years. It worked, and I thank you.

Along the way, the society got stronger. We have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, and I might add the Brady bill background checks stopped 470,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers who shouldn't have gotten handguns from buying them, and not single Arkansan missed a day in the deer woods because of it.

About 20 million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law. I meant to ask Secretary Riley and forgot to, how many millions, but as many millions of young people are now getting the HOPE scholarship, the \$1,500 tax credit, which effectively makes community college available for 100 percent of the people in America today.

Ninety percent of our kids are immunized against serious childhood diseases. In 1994, when the Vice President and I said we wanted to connect all our classrooms and schools to the Internet, 3 percent of our classrooms and 14 percent of our schools had some Internet connection. Today, over 50 percent of our classrooms and over 80 percent of our schools are connected, and we'll be over 90 percent in the new millennium.

This is changing the nature of opportunity in America. I also know that something that's been very interesting here that the Governor and others have been interested in this State is providing health insurance to children. There are 2 million more children with health insurance under the Child Health Insurance Partnership we formed with the States in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, something that's very important to Hillary. In the last budget, we provided funds to help the hospitals who are unduly burdened by the Medicare cuts and provide special funds to train young doctors at children's hospitals throughout America, something that will

really help the Arkansas Children's Hospital here, and we're very proud of that.

While the economy got better, the air got cleaner; the water got cleaner. We set aside more land in protected areas than any administration in the entire history of the country except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. And here's something you might like to know that you deserve more credit for, the people do, than our particular administration, although we have accelerated it quite a bit: The United States, in the production of the volume of waste of all kinds, whether it's what you throw away in the garbage at home or in industrial prospects, is at a 20-year low, even though we have 50 million more people than we had 20 years ago. We are the number one recycling nation in the entire world now, and you can be proud of that.

We've also had 150,000 young people serve our communities in AmeriCorps, like those I met just down the block from the Governor's mansion when the terrible tornado whipped through Little Rock not very long ago.

America has been able to be a force for peace and prosperity in the world. We've had over 270 trade agreements. We just saw another successful move in our long efforts to bring peace to Northern Ireland. I announced a couple of days ago that the Israelis and the Syrians would come back to the United States next week after 4 long years of not talking, to try to finish the work of making a lasting peace in the Middle East. That's a pretty good Christmas legacy to give, and I'm thrilled about that.

We have worked to make our children safer from the kind of problems that will dominate the 21st century: the ethnic and racial cleansing and religious cleansing you saw in Bosnia and Kosovo; the presence of terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. And I can say to you today, after 7 years, I am grateful that I've had the chance to serve. I am more convinced than I was when I went there that we had the right mission with the right ideas. And I am absolutely convinced that I never would have been able to do what I have done to play my part in this remarkable renaissance if I hadn't had

the dozen years I had working with all of you as Governor. And I thank you for that.

Now I'd also like to say that I get a little nervous when I get awards. Normally, I don't think Presidents should get awards, at least when they're alive. [*Laughter*] I mean, the job is honor enough. Although, I must say, I like this one. I'm going to put it up in the White House. But I think it's important to remember that a significant chunk of the time that I have been given to serve is still out there.

They said we wouldn't get anything done this year, and then at the end of the budget session we had 100,000 more teachers to bring smaller classes to the early grades; we had 50,000 more police to keep the crime rate coming down; we had 60,000 housing vouchers to help people move from welfare to work and find a place to live, to keep the welfare rolls coming down; we doubled the amount of funds for after-school programs, something that's really important to increase learning and keep our kids off the street when they may not have any adult supervision.

For the first time I got the Congress to give me some money to give States to identify schools that are failing and turn them around or shut them down, something I think is very important.

There are a lot of things I tried to do I didn't pass, the Patients' Bill of Rights, the minimum wage, the hate crimes legislation, aid for school construction. I'll try to get them next year.

I think Arkansas has done well in these last 7 years. You know, the whole time I was Governor, we went through that terrible time in the eighties when we had a bicoastal economy and the country looked like it was doing well, but the middle of the country wasn't. And then we had the recession that everybody suffered through. Not a single month—I had one month the whole time I was Governor, until 1992 when I ran for President—only one month when our unemployment rate was below the national average. Then it got down below the national average in 1992 because I think of the accumulated efforts that a lot of us made over many years. In 1992 we ranked first or second—I never

saw the final figures—in job growth in the entire country.

But the unemployment rate was 6.7 percent when I took office, and it's 4.3 percent today here. And in many other ways I think you've done well. I could mention some specific things, but I'd like to talk about the general things.

The average Arkansas family now has \$25,000 less Federal debt than you would have had if we hadn't passed the economic plan in '93 and the Balanced Budget Act in '97. The average family in this State and throughout the country, paying a home mortgage, has interest costs that are about \$2,000 a year lower. The average car payment or college loan payment is about \$200 a year lower. This had made a difference in real people's lives.

And as I look at the next 14 months, and as you as citizens look at the coming election season, I just want to ask you, without regard to your party, to think about this: What are we going to do with our prosperity?

Over Thanksgiving, Hillary and I gathered up everybody in our flung families we could; we brought them all in, and then after Thanksgiving, we had some more friends come in to Camp David and had a bunch of little kids there. I just love having them all around, my two nephews and a bunch of other little kids. And this 6-year-old girl looked at me—on Saturday after Thanksgiving—she looked at me and she said, "Now, Mr. President, how old are you, really?" [*Laughter*] And I said, "I'm 53." And she said, "That's a lot." [*Laughter*] And regrettably, I had to agree with her.

Here's what I want to say about that. In my lifetime, in those 53 years, there has never been another time, not one, when our country had this level of economic prosperity, this level of social progress, this level of national self-confidence, with the absence of a crisis at home or a threat from abroad. Never.

Now, a lot of us who are old enough to remember the 1960's, remember how good the economy was in the early sixties in the country, and how it was torn apart because of our inability to fully integrate the civil

rights challenge at home and deal with Vietnam abroad. This has never happened before.

So the question before us is, what are we going to do with it? And as a citizen, I care about that as well as a President. I think there is a heavy responsibility on us, not just the President and the Congress and not just people in Government but the whole country. We have never had this happen, and you know as well as I do that nothing lasts forever. It keeps you going through the tough times, but it's important to remember in the good times.

Here we are, on the edge of a new millennium with the first opportunity in our lifetime as a country to really shape the future of our dreams for our children. And I hope and pray that I can devote every waking minute of the last 14 months of my Presidency and that the American people will devote their energies and concentration in their own lives and their vote as citizens to making a decision based on shouldering the responsibility to shape that future for our children. And that means big changes. What are they? I'll just mention three or four, and end with what I'm going to do when I leave you today.

Number one, we've got to deal with the aging of America. The number of people over 65 is going to double in the next 30 years. I hope to be one of them. It's going to double in the next 30 years. That will be two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. Social Security Trust Fund is projected to run out of money in 2034.

The Medicare Trust Fund, when I took office, was scheduled to run out of money this year. We've pushed it back to 2015 now. We've got to do something about this. Now, let me say there is a big difference of opinion about whether—between the two parties about whether Medicare—I mean Social Security should have individual accounts, and if so, how should they be designed, and should we partially or completely privatize the system. And most Republicans think we should do some of that, and most Democrats think we shouldn't.

But let me just tell you one little simple thing: If we took the interest savings we have from paying down the national debt because we're not spending the Social Security sur-

plus anymore, if we just took the interest savings and put it back in the Trust Fund, we could put that Trust Fund out to 2050, which would take us out beyond the life expectancy of almost 100 percent of the baby boomers, after which the demographics start to get better again.

Now, we've got the money to do that now. We don't have to raise your taxes. We don't have to stop spending money on anything else. We don't have to do anything. It'll never be this easy again. And believe me, it hasn't been this easy for our predecessors, and we ought to do this.

On Medicare, we ought to make some structural reforms that will put some more life into the Medicare Trust Fund, take it out over 20 years. We ought to let people over 55 and under 65 buy into it. It doesn't cost the Treasury any money, and you know, there's tons of people in this country who retire at 55 now, and then something happens to them; they're not covered by a health insurance policy at work anymore; and they can't get any health insurance. It's a huge problem.

And we ought to provide a voluntary prescription drug benefit, because 75 percent of the seniors in this country cannot afford the drug regimen their doctors say they need. So I think we ought to do that.

Now, number two, we ought to recognize that more and more parents are working and do more to help balance work and family. I gave the States the option to use their workers' compensation and their unemployment compensation funds if they wanted to, to experiment with paid family leave. There are lots of other things that can be done, but you know, only 10 percent of the people in the country eligible for Federal assistance for child care are getting it, and I've increased child care funding by 70 percent. And a lot of people go to work every day, really worrying about whether their kids are in quality child care facilities. And it's a big problem.

The family and medical leave law has been a Godsend, but I think we ought to broaden it some. And of course, we have to be sensitive not to hurt the economy. But if you want people to succeed at work, they can't be eaten up inside worrying about their kids, whether they're all right.

If you have to make a choice, we lose before we start, because the most important job of any society is raising children. It is still the most important job of any society, including ours, and we forget that at our peril. So we've got to find a way, since all parents either want to work or have to work, just about, at least the majority, we've got to find the way to balance these things better.

The third thing we have to do, I think, is to work even harder to give every child a world-class education. We have the largest and most diverse student body in history—the first time in the last 2 years we've got a student body bigger than the baby boom generation. And they are going to do great if we give them the tools to do it. I don't want to keep you here all morning, and you know how I like to pontificate about education, so I won't do that. But you need to make that a factor in your decisions, just as I make it a factor in mine.

The next thing we need to do is to find better ways to balance the preservation of the economy and the preservation of the environment. A big thing has happened in the last 5 to 10 years that most people don't believe has happened. It is now possible to grow the economy and reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. That's a fancy way of saying you don't necessarily have to burn more coal and oil and put it out in the atmosphere to get rich. Most people don't believe it, but it's true.

The Agriculture Department had a seminar the other day on biomass fuels, ethanol being the most prominent one now. Right now, it's a problem. It takes seven gallons of gasoline to make eight gallons of ethanol, so the conversion ratio is not too good. They're very, very close to coming up with the technology to make eight gallons of ethanol with one gallon of gasoline. When that happens, it will change the future of America.

In the next year or so, you're going to be able to buy cars that get 70 to 80 miles a gallon with fuel injection engines, some that are blended. They start off on electricity, then go to gasoline, then go back to electricity, and it's just the beginning. You can get windows in houses now that keep out 5 times as much heat or cold and let in 5 times

as much light. You can buy lamps that just in the life of the lamp, will save one ton of greenhouse gas emissions.

With the changes in the White House we have made in the last 6 years, just in the White House, we've taken the equivalent of 700 cars off the highways. This is a big deal, and it is not a question of, in the popular vernacular, hugging trees or growing the economy; it's a question of how to do the self-interested thing, which is to improve the environment and the economy at the same time, and I predict to you it will be a major, major focus for the next 20 years.

The last thing I'd like to mention very briefly is this—because it really applies to Arkansas. We have to find a way to keep the economy going and then to bring the benefits of the economy to the people in places who haven't been a part of this prosperity. And I just want to mention three things. Number one, first things first; we've got to keep paying down this debt. If we stay on the track we're on now, just on the budget path that came out of this last budget session, this country will be out of debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835.

Now, what does that mean? What does that mean? Well, let's take ALLTEL—doing reasonably well. We passed the telecommunications act. It's led already to hundreds of thousands of high-wage jobs at great, high-tech companies. If the country's out of debt and we're not borrowing money, that means there's more money for everybody else to borrow. That means lower interest rates for business loans, faster expansion, more jobs, higher incomes. It means the average family pays less for home mortgages and car payments and college loans. This is a big deal. It's a progressive thing to do.

The second thing we ought to do is work through and keep working at it until we reach a national consensus on this trade issue. If you watched the so-called battle in Seattle, you know that I said I understood why some of the people in the streets wanted to make sure the concerns of working people and the environment were taken account of in trade. But I think they're dead wrong to believe that you can walk away from trade.

Let me tell you, this country is better off today because for 50 years we have worked

harder and harder and harder to integrate the global economy. And yes, if we buy stuff that's made somewhere else, it's very sensitive in Arkansas, because we were—50 years ago our per capita income was only 56 percent of the national average. So we had a lot of low-wage workers. And sure, if we buy stuff made somewhere else, where people don't have the incomes we do, it puts more pressure on our low-wage workers. But it also creates a lot more high-wage jobs.

And the answer is to give everybody lifetime training and to have the kind of environment where you can get the kind of investments to give good jobs to everybody. But we are better off both economically and in terms of our security because, for 50 years, we have continued to expand trade.

And if you don't believe it, just look at all the places in the world that are in trouble. You know that problem we've had in Bosnia and Kosovo I had to send the military to solve. Do you seriously believe we would have had to go to war in the Balkans if their per capita income were not the lowest in Europe? If it were the highest in Europe, would they be fooling around with each other; would they care whether they were Muslims or Orthodox Christians or Roman Catholics if they were all well-educated and they were used to working together and they had more in common than driving them apart?

Or in the Middle East, one of the problems is the abject poverty of the Palestinians. And one of the problems for the Israelis is the limits on their growth because they've got to spend so much on defense. If we were in better shape there economically and everybody were more integrated, don't you think we'd be closer to peace? Do you think people would still be fighting there?

And I'm very proud of the role that I played in the Irish peace process and the role America played and the role George Mitchell played. But let me tell you something. One big reason they made peace in Ireland is that the Republic of Ireland had the fastest growing economy in Europe. A lot of American companies were shipping data processing—raw files to be processed over to Northern Ireland every day and flying them back, and all these kids were growing up saying, "Hey,

that's the future we want. We've got to let this other stuff go."

So we have got to—you've got to help me on this. As Americans, we have got to form a new consensus between business and labor and the environmental community and everybody else that allows us to continue to expand trade. And we ought to put China in the World Trade Organization. It's good for our farmers, good for our manufacturers, good for our investors, and it will make a safer world for our children and our grandchildren. It's a big deal. And I hope you will help me do that as well.

Finally, we ought to give people the same incentives to invest in poor areas in America, like the Arkansas Delta, we give them to invest in poor areas in Latin America or Asia or Africa. And I'm very proud of the fact that this Congress supported my position to relieve the debt of world's poorest nations. I want Americans to invest in poor countries. I believe if you lift people out of poverty, you minimize their profound and primitive racial and ethnic and religious hatreds, and you give them something to live for and look forward to when they get up in the morning. But our people deserve the same thing.

Let me ask you this, again: If we don't do this now, if we can't bring more entrepreneurs and more investment and more jobs to the poorest counties in this State and in our neighboring States and in Appalachia and in upstate New York and rural New England, which is pretty depressed, or on the Indian reservations—the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the unemployment today is 73 percent—and if we can't figure out something to do about this now, when in the world will we ever get around to it?

And when I leave you, I'm going over to West Memphis and to Earle and announce that I'm going to propose in my new budget more than \$110 million to create a Delta regional authority. This will be new investment to fund a bill sponsored by Representative Blanche Lambert Lincoln and—Senator Lincoln and Representative Marion Berry, supported by Congressman Snyder and the entire Arkansas delegation. I think we'll have big bipartisan support for this. We've got to do something about this.

I headed that Delta Commission more than a decade ago. Maybe the time wasn't right; maybe the economy was too tough. We're in good shape now. If we can't bring opportunity to these people in our State and Nation—I'm telling you I've been there. People are dying to go to work. And intelligence is evenly distributed; education is not, but intelligence is. We can get this done now. And I ask for your support for that.

Now because I believe this is a time of big changes, to use your theme, and because I believe these big questions can't possibly be resolved, when I come home to build the library and my policy center, I want to deal with a lot of these big questions: How do you close the digital divide and use these high-tech advances to benefit every American? How do you create good jobs and a clean environment? How do you leave behind the ethnic and religious hatreds, the other kind of hatred that is manifested in hate crimes in America and the tribal slaughters in Africa and all the wars in between? How do you create genuine economic opportunity and empowerment for people who have been poor a very long time?

These are the questions, the kinds of questions that I intend to work on down to the last hour of the last day of my Presidency, and the kind of questions that will be central to me when I come home to build the library and the policy center.

I'd like to begin by just thanking all of you who have supported this. I thank the mayor, the city board of directors and staff, and I'm sorry for the heat you've taken, but it will be a good investment. I thank Paul Harvel and the Greater Little Rock Chamber. I thank Shelby and Joe and the Downtown Partnership. I thank Dr. Alan Sugg and the university system. I thank Skip Rutherford for being my point person down here; all of you who have worked on this.

From the day I was elected President, I was determined that when it was over, I would try to use this library and policy center not only to continue my own interests and passions but to give something back to this State and this community that have given so much to me. Like I said over and over again, if it hadn't been for you, I never would have had the chance to serve. And if it hadn't been

for the experiences you gave me and the lessons I learned, I wouldn't have been prepared to serve at this moment in our history.

So I want to make some dreams come true here in Little Rock. This library can be an energizing force in the life of the city and the broader community. It will attract people from all across the Nation and all across the world. Lots of visitors and lots of people from business and labor and the nonprofit groups in government and journalism.

It can play an important role in the growth and development of Greater Little Rock and all of central Arkansas. I am determined that it will be, first, a beautiful place. The site is wonderful, and so will the building be. It will be architecturally important, and it will be state of the art, environmentally and technologically.

I've talked to Dr. Sugg and the university about starting a graduate program in public policy—that's what they want to do—to prepare more of our young people for careers in public service. And I also want to develop partnerships with corporations all across America to bring their young executives here, to get them to agree to let their young people take a little time off to be in public service without being prejudiced in their rise up the corporate hierarchy.

Let me tell you, there is a program called the White House Fellowships—you may know about it—and we just give a few every year, enough for all the Cabinet Secretaries and one for me, one for a couple of other people in the White House. Hundreds of people apply for them—hundreds. And hundreds get turned down who would be about as good as the handful, the less than 20 we select every year. And so I got this idea.

Now, I realized how dependent we were on the White House Fellows, what fabulous work they did, what great ideas they gave. And think of it, if every company of any size would establish a policy that every year, one or two or three people, depending on the size of the company, could take a year off to serve in State Government, to serve in local government, to serve in the Federal Government, in Washington or at the regional level, to have the experience of government and then come back to the company and continue that career, we could change

the nature of government, the quality of the ideas, the quality of the work, and the quality of the partnership.

And we could end a lot of the kind of battles that we've seen here over too many decades. So this is one of the things that I hope we can do, thanks to Dr. Sugg and his leadership on the education issue.

I want to try to find some ways to, as I said over and over, to help to bridge the racial and other divides in our society and throughout the world. I want to bring here people from Northern Ireland and the Middle East and Bosnia and Kosovo. I want people to see members of these different African tribes. I'll never forget being in Rwanda after they killed over three-quarters of a million people in a 100 days with machetes in a tribal war, and Rwanda had been a coherent country for about 500 years.

I talked to a woman, a beautiful woman—Hillary and I were sitting there talking to her—all dressed up in her fine native dress. And I listened to this wonderful woman, who was still a young woman, talk to me about how her neighbors had turned her in as a member of the other ethnic group, along with her husband and her six children, and how they had come after them with these machetes, and how she was convinced she was going to die. And she woke up covered in blood, and saw her husband and her six children dead around her, all because they were from another tribe. And that would be enough to break most of us, but this woman was devoting her life to trying to help other people let it go and get beyond it.

We could, in this State, in this place, become a beacon of hope for those kind of people. We could train people in societies where these problems exist to get rid of them.

I think it is truly amazing, at a time when we're talking about uncovering the mysteries of the human genome, when a lot of my friends in the profession believe that sometime early in the next century newborn babies will come home from the hospital with a life expectancy of 100 years, when we'll probably find out what's in the black holes in the universe, and we're talking about all this stuff, you know, that the biggest problem of human society is the oldest one: We're

still scared of people that are different from us, and we've got to find a way to let it go.

I want to do more on education. I want to do more on all these issues I mentioned. I also want this library to be a great place of history, and I want to make it interactive, especially for our children, with the latest technologies. I want to help our children and our grandchildren understand the times and the forces that took me to the White House and that I tried to shape and move forward, and then I want them to understand how that relates to tomorrow.

I want this to be a museum but not a mausoleum. I want it to be a place with a lot of touch and involvement and learning. I want to give our young people a window on the new millennium. And I want them to believe when they walk out of there, based on the story of my life and the people we tried to help, that every one of them also has a chance to make their own history.

These are the things I want to do with the library here in Little Rock, not only to glimpse the future but to shape it and share it with our neighbors and our families.

So I say to all of you, again, thanks for helping me get here; thanks for giving us a great 7 years, and thanks for your support of the future. But remember, the most important thing of all is your theme is right: Big changes are coming. It's the only time in our lifetimes we've ever had a chance to make the most of them, and we'd better do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in Governors Halls 2 and 3 at the Statehouse Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Shelby Woods, outgoing chairman of the board, Joe Ford, incoming chairman of the board, Paul Harvel, president, Jesse Mason, education chairman, and Janet Jones, former chairman of the board, Greater Little Rock Chamber of Commerce; Bob Russell, winner of the chamber's Pinnacle Award, and his wife, Beverly; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock; Speaker Bob Johnson, Arkansas House of Representatives; Trudy Reed, president, Philander Smith College; former Senator David H. Pryor; Carl Whillock, Special Assistant to the President, Department of Agriculture; Carol Rasco, Director, America Reads Challenge, Department of

Education; Beth Friday, widow of Herschel Friday, former chairman of the board, Greater Little Rock Chamber of Commerce; former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland; Alan Sugg, president, University of Arkansas; and Skip Rutherford, executive vice president and director of public policy, Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods. Prior to his remarks, the President received the Herschel H. Friday Award.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

December 6

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton attended the Congressional Ball in the Map Room at the White House.

The President declared an emergency in Massachusetts and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by fire on December 3 and continuing.

December 7

The President announced his intention to appoint Deborah E. Lipstadt and Sidney R. Yates to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

December 8

In the morning, the President met with President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine in the Oval Office.

The President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority on the Middle East peace process.

December 9

In the morning, the President met in the Oval Office with representatives of various civil rights organizations, communications industries, and foundations to discuss efforts to narrow the digital divide.

Later, the President traveled to Worcester, MA, and in the afternoon, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to appoint Victoria McCammon Murphy to the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Stuart E. Weisberg as a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to recess appoint Janie L. Jeffers and Marie F. Ragghianti as Commissioners of the U.S. Parole Commission.

December 10

In the morning, the President traveled to Little Rock, AR. Later, he traveled to West Memphis, AR, where in the afternoon he spoke to the community. Later, the President participated in a dedication ceremony for Earle High School in Earle, AR.

In the evening, the President traveled to Orlando, FL.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released December 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing the "Ask the White House" Internet service

Fact sheet: Human Rights Day 1999 and Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award

Fact sheet: Taliban Persecution of Women and Girls in Afghanistan

Announcement: Attendees at Congressional Black Caucus Meeting

Released December 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Joe Lockhart

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved December 6

H.R. 459 / Public Law 106–121
To extend the deadline under the Federal Power Act for FERC Project No. 9401, the Mt. Hope Waterpower Project

H.R. 1094 / Public Law 106–122
To amend the Federal Reserve Act to broaden the range of discount window loans which may be used as collateral for Federal reserve notes

H.R. 1191 / Public Law 106–123
To designate certain facilities of the United States Postal Service in Chicago, Illinois

H.R. 1251 / Public Law 106–124
To designate the United States Postal Service building located at 8850 South 700 East, Sandy, Utah, as the “Noal Cushing Bateman Post Office Building”

H.R. 1327 / Public Law 106–125
To designate the United States Postal Service building located at 34480 Highway 101 South in Cloverdale, Oregon, as the “Maurine B. Neuberger United States Post Office”

H.R. 3373 / Public Law 106–126
To require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in conjunction with the minting of coins by the Republic of Iceland in commemoration of the millennium of the discovery of the New World by Leif Ericson

H.J. Res. 85 / Public Law 106–127
Appointing the day for the convening of the second session of the One Hundred Sixth Congress

S. 574 / Public Law 106–128
To direct the Secretary of the Interior to make corrections to a map relating to the Coastal Barrier Resources System

S. 580 / Public Law 106–129
Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999

S. 1418 / Public Law 106–130
To provide for the holding of court at Natchez, Mississippi, in the same manner as court is held at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and for other purposes

Approved December 7

H.R. 449 / Public Law 106–131
Gateway Visitor Center Authorization Act of 1999

H.R. 592 / Public Law 106–132
To designate a portion of Gateway National Recreation Area as “World War Veterans Park at Miller Field”

H.R. 747 / Public Law 106–133
Arizona Statehood and Enabling Act Amendments of 1999

H.R. 748 / Public Law 106–134
To amend the Act that established the Keweenaw National Historical Park to require the Secretary of the Interior to consider nominees of various local interests in appointing members of the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission

H.R. 791 / Public Law 106–135
Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Study Act of 1999

H.R. 970 / Public Law 106–136
Perkins County Rural Water System Act of 1999

H.R. 1794 / Public Law 106–137
Concerning the participation of Taiwan in the World Health Organization (WHO)

H.R. 2979 / Public Law 106–138
Terry Peak Land Transfer Act of 1999

H.R. 2886 / Public Law 106–139
To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide that an adopted alien who is less than 18 years of age may be considered

a child under such Act if adopted with or after a sibling who is a child under such Act

H.R. 2889 / Public Law 106–140

To amend the Central Utah Project Completion Act to provide for acquisition of water and water rights for Central Utah Project purposes, completion of Central Utah project facilities, and implementation of water conservation measures

H.R. 3257 / Public Law 106–141
State Flexibility Clarification Act

H.J. Res. 65 / Public Law 106–142
Commending the World War II veterans who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and for other purposes

S. 28 / Public Law 106–143
Four Corners Interpretive Center Act

S. 416 / Public Law 106–144
To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey to the city of Sisters, Oregon, a certain parcel of land for use in connection with a sewage treatment facility

Approved December 9

H.R. 15 / Public Law 106–145
Otay Mountain Wilderness Act of 1999

H.R. 658 / Public Law 106–146
Thomas Cole National Historic Site Act

H.R. 1104 / Public Law 106–147
To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction over land within the boundaries of the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site to the Archivist of the United States for the construction of a visitor center

H.R. 1528 / Public Law 106–148
National Geologic Mapping Reauthorization Act of 1999

H.R. 1619 / Public Law 106–149
Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor Reauthorization Act of 1999

H.R. 1665 / Public Law 106–150
To allow the National Park Service to acquire certain land for addition to the Wilderness

Battlefield in Virginia, as previously authorized by law, by purchase or exchange as well as by donation

H.R. 1693 / Public Law 106–151
To amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to clarify the overtime exemption for employees engaged in fire protection activities

H.R. 1887 / Public Law 106–152
To amend title 18, United States Code, to punish the depiction of animal cruelty

H.R. 1932 / Public Law 106–153
Father Theodore M. Hesburgh Congressional Gold Medal Act

H.R. 2140 / Public Law 106–154
To improve protection and management of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in the State of Georgia

H.R. 2401 / Public Law 106–155
U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999

H.R. 2632 / Public Law 106–156
Dugger Mountain Wilderness Act of 1999

H.R. 2737 / Public Law 106–157
To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the State of Illinois certain Federal land associated with the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to be used as an historic and interpretive site along the trail

H.R. 3381 / Public Law 106–158
Export Enhancement Act of 1999

H.R. 3419 / Public Law 106–159
Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999

H.R. 3456 / Public Law 106–160
To amend statutory damages provisions of title 17, United States Code

H.J. Res. 46 / Public Law 106–161
Conferring status as an honorary veteran of the United States Armed Forces on Zachary Fisher

S. 67 / Public Law 106–162

To designate the headquarters building of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, District of Columbia, as the “Robert C. Weaver Federal Building”

S. 438 / Public Law 106–163

Chippewa Cree Tribe of The Rocky Boy’s Reservation Indian Reserved Water Rights Settlement and Water Supply Enhancement Act of 1999

S. 548 / Public Law 106–164

Fallen Timbers Battlefield and Fort Miamis National Historic Site Act of 1999

S. 791 / Public Law 106–165

Women’s Business Centers Sustainability Act of 1999

S. 1595 / Public Law 106–166

To designate the United States courthouse at 401 West Washington Street in Phoenix, Arizona, as the “Sandra Day O’Connor United States Courthouse”

S. 1866 / Public Law 106–167

John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Act